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THE WHITE CROWN

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FROM THE BOOKS
IN THE HOMESTEAD OF

Sarah Orne Jewett

AT SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE

BEQUEATHED BY

Theodore Jewett Eastman

A.B. 1901 - M.D. 1905

1931

THE WHITE CROWN

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

HERBERT D. WARD

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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1894

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1931

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[1] Reprinted from *Harper's Magazine.*

THE WHITE CROWN.

EUROPE is a garrison. Its frontiers are but a succession of fortresses, whose guards are bipedal dogs trained to fret at a strange face or to bite the uninvited guest. Its cities are scientific intrenchments, and its citizens are unwilling recruits.

Spring is not hailed by the powers with poetic enthusiasm, nor is it greeted by the commoners in rhapsodies. The Continental spring may prove not the glad awakener of life but the signal for the final atrocity of high civilization, — wholesale murder legalized. For with the new crispness of the grass, the tender buds upon the trees, and the bridal songs of the cuckoo and the lark, come the intricate evolutions of battalions of men taken from the plow, and come the rumors of war. Suspicions, jealousies, hatreds that have hibernated for very cold now creep forth and warm themselves into malignant activity. Frost deprives vipers of their sting and armies of success. Europe breathes a sigh of relief when the winter sets in cold. It trembles at the farmer's prediction of an early spring. It stands guard when the last ice is melted, and apprehensively awaits the mailed gauntlet, ignorant from what quarter the emblem of defiance will be cast. Is the Czar about to

execute the dream of his dynasty against Constantinople? Has France intrigued with the Duke of Luxembourg? Or has she bribed Belgium? Or both? What means this new uprising in Bulgaria against the Turkish yoke? Will Austria break her last treaty with Germany, her hereditary foe, and afford Russia a highway for the price of the land filched by Frederick the Great from Maria Theresa? Why has France a standing army of three millions? Does she herself perchance menace, and still cherish the hope of Alsace and Lorraine? Is the German Empire the nut or the cracker?

During the spring of which we write the politics of Europe took to itself an unusually bloody hue. There was a strange restlessness in diplomatic circles which did not fail to communicate itself to the lower classes. It was rumored that the Czar was about to mobilize four army corps upon his western frontier; and it was known that the pneumatic rifle, the secret of which the Russian government had purchased from an American, noiselessly projected its bullet at an initial velocity one third greater than the smokeless rifles of Austria, Italy, Germany, and France. The commination of the Slavs, the nightmare of the Teutonic races, was almost a wakeful reality. An ambassadorial discourtesy, a drunken officer on the frontier, a mistaken dispatch, — these were sufficient to fulminate the catastrophe.

The famous remark of a German emperor, "I

wish my subjects taught to be Germans, not hoary Romans; soldiers, not near-sighted dreamers," added a new fervor to patriotism. Enormous army credits were voted by the Reichstag. The war-footing was increased five hundred thousand, and the women turned the clods in the valleys, and sowed the grain unaided by their men, as bravely and almost as sadly as if the battle were actually at hand.

"My God! what is a soldier, if you come to that?" asked one of a group of peasants who were planting potatoes.

The youngest of them, a maiden, laughed. She had neither brother nor sweetheart in the army. "Don't you know?" She tossed her head carelessly. "Why, a soldier is a fellow who makes his living by being killed." As no one joined in her merriment, she looked around and saw tears in the eyes of her companions.

The spring opened with manœuvres upon field and ocean. Tactless Germany flaunted her lancers and artillery in the eyes of France; and France, rejoicing like the morning in her strength, shrugged her shoulders at her beery foe and suddenly massed a million men at St. Dié, Lunéville, Nancy, Verdun, Rocroy, Malplaquet, and Lille. Well said Jean Jacques Rousseau, "It is nobler to plant trees on a terrace than colors on a breach." Who can understand that in the Christian year of our story a nation could be proud of the science of sending men out of the world?

Alas for Europe! When the first shot is fired there will come a struggle such as the world has never imagined. The strain will be terrible and long. There will be no masking of movements and surprises under the friendly cover of smoke. A new genius of victory must be evolved. A new courage and stimulus and discipline must be born. The carnage of the battlefield will be presented in all its ghastliness from dawn till dark. To win, the dead must outnumber the living. "War is an inexorable, dangerously incalculable thing," wrote Carlyle. "Is it not a terrible question, at whose door lies the beginning of a war?"

It was the middle of March, and the wind blew as skittishly up the Charlottenburger Chaussée into the Thiergarten as it does up Fifth Avenue into Central Park. There was no snow; spring had promised early, but the ground was hard and dusty and uncompromising. Even a flurry of clean snow would have been easier to bear than these drifts of fetid powder that kissed a traveler with insulting freedom, and then slapped him on the other cheek and hurried on.

The traveler shook his head and shoulders bravely after each poisonous embrace, and walked the faster, for it was growing dark. A detachment of Pomeranian infantry had marched from Berlin to Potsdam that morning at five; a stranger had accompanied them to their barracks, and now he was returning to the capital. It was not quite time for the incandescent lights, and up the straight avenue from

the railroad-crossing the Brandenburg Thor could be seen dimly whenever the warring hurricanes of dust permitted.

Our traveler had a high-born mien, and yet he had walked thirty miles that bitter day. He had not a military gait, and, as he must have been nearly forty years old, clearly he was not a German. He was tall and well-proportioned. From the rear view there was nothing that challenged attention about him except occasional quick upward motions of the head. These movements sometimes attracted the glances of stolid pedestrians whom he passed in his hurried walk, and awoke in their dull imaginations the idea of nervous resolve. But those who met the man face to face were startled. Many turned and stared at him. A few walked deliberately back and then turned again so as to see that face a second time. Certainly the stranger was not thinking of the weather; that would have distorted the symmetry of his countenance. Nor could he have been intent upon the noble park at his right, nor upon his journey's end before him, for this would have given to his look the expression of passing interest. His forehead was high above the eyes, and of the translucency of pallid onyx. His eyes were as deep as a coal-mine and as black; but from them there came a steady flow of light, heat, and emotion. When men saw his eyes for the first time it seemed to them as if they had lived unlighted and unwarmed until then. His mouth was fine and

firm, and yet, in spite of its gravity, there played about its corners a humor that made children run after him to play; but they never touched him, they knew not why. His beard fell full to his breast, and his brown hair with virile waves clung to his shoulders. The delicacy of woman and the strength of man were revealed by the texture of his hair and the spring of his pace. As he walked, his look was inward rather than observant. He appeared entranced with a tremendous problem. People were bewildered and awed, even humbled, as they looked upon him; and then they looked again. The power that radiated from this stranger seemed to be the power of a body tingling with every function of life, whose mind was dominated by a unique idea, which the soul in turn ordered to a final expression. Yet he stooped like one who carried a crushing burden, and his cheeks and eyes paled and glowed as if his were a sleepless mission.

"A hundred thousand thunders! What have we here now?"

Five officers had come down the broad walk abreast, arm in arm. Women had been pushed aside by them in their ungentlemanly advance. Children had rushed to the street to escape brutality. Civilians had slunk into the gutter, not daring to withstand the haughty onslaught. The stranger lifted up his eyes and looked upon them.

"Gott in Himmel!" began another, blusteringly, but the execration died away. A third touched his sword, but his hand dropped from its hilt. The

five boisterous guardsmen shriveled under the calm gaze of this dusty wayfarer, saluted in a shame-faced way, and filed respectfully past him without a murmur. The stranger seemed in no wise elated by the humility of these military lords; it could hardly be said that he noticed what he seemed to take as a matter of course. Was he a general in disguise? Not so, for there is an edict that no officer shall appear without his uniform in the street. Von Moltke wore a civilian's dress but once in his official career of seventy years, and then he burned it after he had exchanged courtesies with an American. Could this stranger have been a prince incognito? Would a prince walk to Potsdam and back when there is a railroad — and in March?

And now he set his face more resolutely towards the Brandenburg Gate, and began to look about him as if he expected to be met. He passed a private and a corporal talking aloud.

"Ach, Rudolph, thinkest thou that the Kaiser will have war this summer?"

"Ei, Fritz; perhaps. I for my part am content as it is. Thou knowest I have nearly served my time, and in June I go back to the good mother and my sweetheart, please God."

"But, thou foolish head, if it be God's will that we smite the French? Thunder and lightning! There is glory for the Kaiser" —

"A dead soldier thinketh little of the Kaiser's glory," interrupted Rudolph soberly.

"Na-na, thou art a cabbage-head, and knowest naught of powder and glory" —

"I dare fight," protested the private hotly; "thou knowest that, comrade. I go against the cursed Frenchman gladly, and that thou knowest also. Was not my father at Sedan, and Metz, and Paris? Now I understand this not. There are Hans, and Peter, and thy cousin Fried'l with the six infants. The frau of Hans is a sickly thing, and weepeth about his neck. When the two brothers of Peter were killed at Strassburg, — thou rememberest how the captain said they never had a chance to fire a shot, and they bled to death, and their mother died of heart sorrows, — tell me now, was that glory?"

"Nay; I know not," answered Fritz, with an embarrassed stammer. "That is the Kaiser's business, not mine."

The stranger passed beyond the voices of the simple couple. The peasant class of Germany furnish loyalty and to spare. But to what? A travesty, a principle, or a power?

The words he had overheard recalled him to his first thoughts. He walked abstractedly. His head drooped towards his breast. Clouds of dust enveloped him and nagged him. He seemed to be struggling in an agony, but whether of the body or of the spirit, whether he were fighting the wind or wrestling in prayer, who should say? When he reached the Avenue of Victory he instinctively stopped. Equipages swung around the corner

with Russian swiftness. Many were open, and the electric lights were now reflected from epaulets and helmets. What a surge at this hour! It was the rush of an army, for every three men out of four were clothed in uniform. The sight was brilliant; the cost must have been terrible. But who thought of that, except when an increased war-budget was ostentatiously fought in the Reichstag, or a scheme for increasing the taxes was opposed by a few tremulous representatives of a desperate people?

The stranger looked up at the monument of Victory before him, towering in the Koenig's Platz to the height of two hundred feet. The huge eagles at the summit were now imperious in the white electric glare, and now extinguished by the shadow of the storm.

"Victory!" he mused, half aloud; the carriages muffled his voice. "Two hundred feet of victory purchased with how many feet of graves!"

The crowd hustled him, and, as he turned, they divided, and he walked on. Almost under the Brandenburg Gate he stopped again. This Athenian structure is surmounted by a quadriga of victory.

"Victory again! Four-yoked victory!" he mused. "Truly a fit name for victory. Glory, oppression, execration, death, are the yokes of thy victory, O King!"

As he spoke, outriders and a carriage plunged through the central passage of the Doric gate. Confused cries of "Hoch!" greeted the Emperor.

Hats were deferentially raised. Only the stranger remained covered. A guard sprang forward, but the stranger waved him off, and the uniform fell back. The young ruler bent far out to the exceptional sight. Being a military man, he had a veneer of popularity with his people, and was unused to discourtesy. The two men regarded each other. It seemed as if for the passing second each engraved the other upon the retina of his soul. A fierce strangulation of rage burst hotly, like a sudden perspiration, upon the Emperor. He tried to brush it off with an unconcerned laugh. He felt disconcerted for the first time in his life, and was ashamed to mention the matter to his aide-de-camp. But the stranger stood with eyes full of overwhelming sorrow.

At this moment some one respectfully touched him upon his arm.

"You are prompt and faithful. I am glad that my comrade is at hand," the stranger said without turning.

"I am here as you ordered. The dispatches are in my hands, and the loyal await your commands."

"We enter the Austrian Embassy," replied the stranger quietly. "A private room awaits us there."

"The Austrian Embassy!" exclaimed the other.

"And why not?"

"But I thought" —

"Think no more," returned the stranger, smiling. "Think not, but obey and trust."

The two entered the Embassy silently. A bowing attaché escorted them to an ante-chamber, and after a whisper from the stranger obsequiously closed the door and mounted guard without.

"In an hour I am gone," began he who was plainly the master. "You have dispatches from Stralsund, Dantzic, Königsberg, Bromberg, Breslau, Dresden, and Stuttgart."

"I have, indeed, sire. Here they are."

The stranger read the papers carefully, while his companion, with an expression in which astonishment, respect, and love struggled for the mastery regarded him attentively.

"And Spandau?" inquired the stranger without looking up.

"The commandant will be present at the meeting to-night."

"That is well done. How many, think you, wear the white crown in Berlin to-night?"

"The reports give a few over thirteen thousand."

"Add ten thousand more. And the Emperor?"

"Baron Van der Weh is to-day in favor. His report conveys the hope that the Emperor will appoint a new General of Division. Von Eisenach is spoken of."

"He too is ours. Three months more, — if hearts are true, — Europe is saved. My time is due. Send the messengers I spoke of to Potsdam to-morrow. They shall stay until every man is won. They will find the Pomeranians come. Give

orders"— Then followed with precision and with the peculiar authoritativeness of a hopeful and practical dreamer minute commands, given in a low voice.

"His excellency the ambassador desires audience, sire," interrupted the attaché, with deferential salute.

While the stranger sat alone awaiting this visitor, his glance fell upon his own dusty boots, and he smiled at their contrast with the gorgeous rug beneath them. As he lifted his face, and even while he heard a commanding step along the corridor, something of irresistible triumph flashed forth from foot to face. Yet there was nothing of haughtiness in it, nor of self-satisfaction. In a twinkling the blaze of conscious power was over, and as he slightly bent his head he murmured to himself these words: —

"*Yea, Jesus, thou art first.*"

The spacious apartments of General la Guerre, Chief of Division, were situated in the Avenue de la Grande Armée. The general was still young, — that is, not old, — and Paris had not yet learned to be fickle to her distinguished soldier. He had been recalled from Algiers, promoted to the head of his division, with headquarters in Besançon, and was now on an indefinite furlough in Paris in order that he might perfect his destructive inventions at the expense of the state. General la Guerre held a brilliant court. Some salons

whispered his name for Minister of War; a few inner circles enthusiastically recommended him as a marshal of France, while "Le Temps" hinted vaguely that he might become the creator of a new political party.

General la Guerre sat impatiently awaiting a visitor; and as the general had lost money at piquet the night before, he was already prejudiced against the man before he was announced. The general's greeting, however, was courteous, as became a Frenchman.

"I have called because the time has come that I should do so," began his visitor. He spoke so gently, and withal so authoritatively, that the general's attention was arrested at once. At the first glance the officer's soul started within him before the face he saw. He could not describe it afterward, but his impression was one of a man of such purity and faith that he had strength to move the world.

"You are not a soldier, sir," said the general, confusedly, not knowing what he said.

"No; but I command my hundreds of thousands of soldiers."

In spite of this preposterous statement, worthy of the maddest brain that trembled, the general found himself compelled to believe that the speaker said the truth.

The stranger began to explain himself, and he poured forth his purposes as the clouds pour forth the rain. For three mortal hours the two men sat in solemn conclave. At first the general tried to

look wearied. He lighted a cigarette, and toyed with it. Then he cast it aside, and welded his eyes upon the stranger's face.

"Sacred name of God!" he exclaimed, "can this be possible?" As the stranger sketched his awful mission the general's excitement increased. "Name of a dog!" he ejaculated. "*Sacré bleu!*" he muttered. At last he could contain himself no longer. "*Mille tonnerres!* Monsieur, for God's sake, who are you?"

The stranger shook his head, and continued. Then came timid questions and convincing replies. The general paced the room feverishly. There was one more question left. With a supreme effort the soldier shot it out.

"But, sir, is this not called, in vulgar language, treason?"

"What is the debt of France?" asked the stranger unmoved.

"Thirty milliards of francs."

"Who pays its enormous interest?"

"The people of France."

"What is the present peace-footing of the army?"

"Fifteen hundred thousand men."

"What do they do?"

"Drill."

"Why?"

"To be able to fight."

"Why?"

"For France."

"Why?"

The general shook his head.

"Who pays for this?"

"The people."

"Do you ever hear them murmur, General? Are tears treason? Is misery rebellion? Can you impeach widowhood and desolation?"

"The consequences of the military idea are matters of course," protested the general.

"Possibly. You may have never thought of another consequence. How many citizens, think you, are mine in France to-day?"

"Dieu! How know I?"

"Open the window, General, and look out. What do you see?"

"A company of Zouaves marching this way."

"You are their superior officer. Order them to halt, and call two men up. Choose the men yourself."

General la Guerre accepted the challenge without remark. At his brusque command two privates quickly saluted at the doorway, and awkwardly shuffled in. Wonderingly the company stood attention below, while its captain fumed at the interference.

The stranger approached the two uncomfortable men, spoke to them a word, and unbuttoned their coats. Upon the shirt of each a silver badge shaped like a crown was thus made visible.

"I am *he*," slowly said the stranger to the two soldiers. At that word tremors of joy seized these

men. They would have fallen upon their knees, but he constrained them.

"I have dreamed of this, but believed it not," stammered one.

"I am content. When shall the word be spoken?" asked the other.

"In God's time," replied the stranger serenely. With a reverential salute the soldiers softly filed out.

The stranger turned with enraptured face upon his bewildered host.

"These are but two of a million taken at your random choice. France is mine. Germany is mine"—

"What? Germany? Mon Dieu! Who are you? Speak!" The Frenchman clasped his hands as only a Frenchman can.

"Austria is mine," continued the terrible stranger, heedless of the interruption. "Italy is mine. Denmark and Sweden are mine. Spain totters to my arms. Russia heeds my beckonings. England has resigned to me. Behold, I hold Europe in my hand; and when I open it, let her kings tremble."

"Take me!" cried the man of war. "Take me for your comrade! I am yours. Believe me,"—his voice faltered in his great emotion,—"I swear it on my sword."

"Not on the sword, but on this," said the stranger, smiling. He drew from his bosom a plain emblem like the one the soldiers showed, and put it

softly in the general's hand. In comparison with his claim for authority, the badge seemed singularly simple and cheap. It was of silver, unchased, unjeweled. The thin plate was cut in the fashion of a crown, and the whole was polished to a curious whiteness. The trinket fascinated the eye. Was this simple emblem bewitched or blessed?

"It is only a soldier's order," said the stranger slowly, "but its possession confers the rarest opportunity and calls forth the largest loyalty of your life. Wear it, General la Guerre, not in my name, but in the name of your people, and in a greater name than that of France. 'For Christ's sake' is the watchword of him who wears the silver crown."

St. Petersburg slept. The brilliant moon guarded its streets. Now and again a fitful patrol took a step forward at the sound of approaching feet, looked at the pedestrian insolently, and slunk back into his dark corner as the suspect passed. At irregular intervals the thundering of an equipage at full gallop awoke somnolent echoes that chased each other from side to side and died away in a duet of angry snarls. The guard always smiled indulgently at such rumbles, for these were nobles returning home, poor of purse, intoxicated with champagne, and by the Tsigani's voluptuous music and dance.

It was one o'clock, and the bell of Cazan rang out "God save the Czar!" St. Petersburg turned

uneasily on its pillow, muttered an invocation to the Virgin, and slept the weary sleep of one above a mine and a countermine.

Only the Czar of all the Russias did not rest. He paced his cabinet like a conquered leopard. His face was haggard from aged anxiety. He glanced at a paper and sighed deeply. At last, with despairing resoluteness, he tapped a bell and handed a written order to his aide. Then he suspiciously watched the door close. He stepped softly to it, and listened attentively; then he pulled a curtain tremulously aside, and hastened through a secret passage to an unused bedchamber, there to pass another unassassinated night.

From the stuccoed palace of Prince Azov no light flashed except the electric glitter of the Nevskoi Prospect and the glimmer of the moon, both of which fought brilliant combats on the hundred-plated panes, and were beaten back in a thousand zigzag, dismembered rays.

Suddenly there was a violent ringing at the porter's bell. Twenty black figures pushed by the stolid servant and forced their way into the sumptuous apartments of the Prince. Escritoires were wrenched open. Papers were hurriedly examined and stowed away by practiced hands. Like locusts they ravaged until they came to the inner chambers.

"In the name of the Czar," was their ominous excuse.

Bedrooms were ruthlessly invaded. Ladies shrieked. A shot was fired. The Prince, pale,

but with forced dignity, cried out to the leader of the horde: —

"Halt! Whom seek ye?"

"Yourself, Prince, and your guest."

A door opened, and a tall man of dignified mien appeared. He was fully dressed, as if he were prepared. His cape was on his shoulder. His hat was in his hand. He spoke to the leader: —

"I am ready; take me. Am I not enough?" At the sound of his deep voice the soldiers fell back a step, but the leader advanced.

"My commands are to escort his Royal Highness also."

"Then do your duty, in God's name, and be quick," spoke up the Prince in a clear, proud voice.

Such expeditions are too common to be managed bunglingly. The Prince and his guest were quickly and deftly, though respectfully, hurried into a black carriage, the patrol on the street carelessly muttered, "Another!" and before the bells tolled two the prison-fortress had shut her relentless gates upon two more victims of the Czar's tyranny.

"It gives me great pain, your Highness," said the commandant to his titled prisoner after the usual formalities of registration were completed, "it affords me much distress to see you here; but I am empowered to make your visit as comfortable as I can, and to assure you on the honor of the highest authority that you will not be detained from your home above three days. No crime is laid at your door. The detention is bureaucratic, not penal. Have you any request to make?"

The Prince shook his head skeptically, and was respectfully conducted to an apartment princely in comparison with uncounted oubliettes forty feet below it, dens too hideous to describe, too dark to see at midday, whose slimy walls are ever bathed by the icy ripples of the Neva. When the Prince had gone, the commandant turned to the stranger before him. He seemed to regard the prisoner coldly and accusingly. The prisoner returned the look with a dignity unalloyed by bravado; then he let his glance travel from face to face, not omitting the secretary sitting before him. The eyes of the prisoner dilated curiously after he had finished his inspection, while his countenance lost nothing of its powerful expression of serenity.

"Your name?"

"I am called, but nameless," replied the prisoner quietly.

"You trifle, sir," said the commandant, severely enough. "It is too late for pleasantries; conduct the man to N. The examination will be continued to-morrow."

The commandant looked the other way, while the prisoner was led to a subterranean cell, the oozing stones and malignant fetors of which had decayed the body and broken the will of more than a score of Russia's martyred patriots.

A half hour later one of the most extraordinary scenes ever witnessed by this prison, historic with surprises, was enacted in the cell from whose iron door exuded the letter N.

Within its oval walls knelt the commandant of the fortress, pleading with the prisoner of his apparent scorn. He clasped the stranger's hands and kissed them with the veneration which Russians feel towards religious emblems. The stranger bent above him, and with the tenderness to which the Russian tongue lends itself called him dear one and loyal brother.

"Now will I conduct you safely out," cried the commandant, his voice broken with emotion. He felt that fervor for self-immolation which forms the essence of the Slavic patriot. He knew that execution or lifelong banishment would follow, — a speedy penalty for this act of treason. The rough keeper of this horrible fortress was in an ecstasy of self-sacrifice.

"You are needed, sire," he added simply. "I have no family, and can easily sink beneath the current. No one will be the sadder." The stranger shook his head tenderly.

"But, sire, the cause calleth you. I hear its cry. Hasten, or it is too late!" Beads of anguish stood out upon the commandant's face. He had reached that stage of self-annihilation in which he was afraid that his sacrifice would be denied him. "For Christ's sake!" he added solemnly. He reverently took from his bosom a silver periapt cut in the image of a crown, and pressed it to his lips. That was his final, unanswerable argument.

The prisoner's eyes quivered with tears. In the dull light of the lantern it could be seen that his

lips pressed themselves together passionately in the act of great self-control, and that in spite of himself he wept. Such precious loyalty might well move a strong man, and leave him unashamed of the rare tear. Then the stranger bent over his friend and kissed him as if the touch were a rite of benediction.

"For Christ's sake I will not. I have come to save life, not to spill it. Never shall death enter the world through me. I should be accursed if it happened thus. Arise, my friend; get thee quickly to thy room. Station two guards before thy door that it be publicly known that thou art there, and there do thou stay until the reveille calls the morrow. Nay; speak not, nor grieve for me. Thou hast done thy duty, and art absolved. God will suffer no harm to me until my work is done. That is my faith. Do thou also hold it. Now, go! I command thee, for Christ's sake, go!"

The commandant obeyed with dull homage. Mechanically he closed the iron door, sorrowfully he locked it, slowly and obediently he went to his own room.

At sunrise the next morning there was a running to and fro within the prison courts, and the hubbub of a terrible excitement. A turnkey had discovered the stranger's cell to be empty. In fact, the man had mysteriously disappeared. There were rumors afloat that with the strength of a hundred giants, such as composed the guard of Frederick William, he had burst the bars asunder, and had

forced an exit to the world. But upon examination the bolts were found intact, the walls untouched. There was another subtler report that there had been a mighty treason among the minor guards of the prison, that they had arisen and had themselves escorted the powerful stranger without the walls and the moat. But the commandant was unimpeachable. The guards were ignorant and dumb. Only an unintercepted glance now and then was furtively exchanged between a few soldiers whose reputation for hebetude from that hour began to wax. At any rate, the prisoner had vanished, and a few high officials came in time to believe that their victim had not been apprehended by them at all.

The Emperor of Germany awoke on the morning of the first of June with the impression that he had been drinking ink. Indigestion had violently assaulted him, and his head felt as if it were an eight-inch mortar charged with melinite to the muzzle, and ready to burst at an incautious touch. The august sufferer groaned. For once he had allowed himself to depart from his habitual abstemiousness, and at the British Legation the night before he had eaten some truffles prepared by an accursed French cook, and had imbibed too much French champagne, to the detriment of his principles and his stomach. Now it was already seven o'clock, his usual rising hour, and he could hardly move. Eminent maledictions were stifled with

heroic restraint before they rose to his tongue, for, in spite of his sufferings, he remembered that he was the father of his children as well as the father of his fatherland.

At last, with a tremendous effort of will, he arose, staggered into his uniform, and felt his way to his first breakfast. Confident that if he could only get on horseback and gallop sharply before his soldiers on the parade-ground he would feel better, he was just about to give the order for his mount when his chamberlain approached him.

"Your Majesty, Monsieur the French Ambassador desires audience on important business."

Now the important business that made demands at so unreasonable an hour happened to be due to a little fracas on the French frontier. Two ignorant French peasants had been arrested because they chanced to be gathering wood three furlongs beyond the soil of France. They had been summarily seized by a squad of German soldiers, and, naturally indignant at such rough measures, one of them had protested tooth and nail. He had been calmly shot, and buried where he lay. The other was hurried into the nearest German fortress on the preposterous charge of being a French spy, and now the government at Paris was trying to "diplomate" him out. Feeling ran high on both sides of Lorraine, and the Emperor had been considerably annoyed. But to have this low-born republican ambassador demand to see him at this hour was more than he could bear.

"Pots tausend! Thunderweather! Tell him to come again when I am at leisure."

"But" — urged the oily chamberlain.

"By the beard of Barbarossa!" exploded the man of melinite.

There was no need to say more. The official vanished with his uncomfortable message.

The Emperor was somewhat appeased, and was about to descend to the courtyard to mount, when General Von Eisenach and Baron Van der Weh, the new Minister of War, were announced, and, with the liberty of intimacy, rushed resonantly in and saluted their imperial master.

The Emperor's head was still in a state of whizzing turmoil. His eyes saw nothing but blackness before them. His dyspepsia was so severe that he hardly knew what he said, and was aware of only one thing thoroughly, namely, that he was extremely irritable, and that it was impossible for him to be anything else.

"Well, what now?" asked the Emperor sternly.

"Your Majesty," answered the Minister of War breathlessly, "I have just spoken with the French ambassador. He asserts that France will brook no delay. The man must be surrendered, and an indemnity must be paid, *instanter*."

The Emperor clutched the hilt of his sword in the heat of his passion. He did not know that it was truffles and champagne. He forgot that there was a German outrage which his better sense would gladly redress. He was only conscious that France had made an insulting demand.

"Himmel! Cross! Thunderweather! The Frenchman shall rot in Metz first!" burst forth the ruler. "What sayest thou, Eisenach?"

The young general looked at the young Emperor, and then at the young Minister of War. He hesitated to speak. His answer might lose him his division, or Germany an opportunity of honest amends. But his blood was up, too. His immaturity decided him.

"*Ja, wohl!* Your Majesty is right. Let the French bay. We growl not, but we bite."

The Emperor smiled for the first time on that memorable morning.

"And thou, Van der Weh?" He turned upon his Minister of War.

"France shall not dictate to the fatherland," answered Van der Weh sententiously.

The Kaiser's face burned with excitement. His blood pumped itself to and fro as if in a fire-engine. He imagined himself fanned by the righteous bellows of patriotism.

"Ye are my friends indeed," — he took the hands of the two men in his, — "and the protectors of the German honor. If needs be, we will fight. Eh, my friends, will we not?"

Never had there been such a declaration by the hot ruler before. His enormous armies were held ostensibly in the interest of peace. He had forgotten that the continued sight of battalions of men drilled to the guns was as much the temptation to use them as the sight of cognac is the

incentive to drink. It is easier to create an opportunity of trying an army than the army itself.

The three looked at one another, almost frightened by the words just spoken. Their terrible import stole over these men. Then it began to intoxicate them. They stood inspecting one another silently, but with eloquent eyes.

"See that my will be made known to the ambassador," said the Emperor hurriedly to his Minister of War. Then he removed his hands, and with a dramatic motion drew forth his sword. "But should France insist, she shall not outventure us this time in a declaration. By the gods of our fathers, I believe my hour has come. Now will I place my brother upon the throne of Spain! Now shall I have my Gravelotte and my Sedan, my Strassburg and my Paris!"

Inspired by this enthusiasm, the two subjects had also unconsciously taken attitudes worthy of a historical painter.

The Emperor paced the chamber restlessly, while Van der Weh hastened to transmit his commands. Von Eisenach stood attention, and eyed his master anxiously. For fully two hours the one paced, and the other watched, without speaking. They were not interrupted. Lackeys are quick. The rumor had spread abroad that the Emperor was "sad," and not even his children ventured to pay their morning respects of ceremony.

"Mein Gott! It is done," panted the Minister as he plunged into the apartment.

The Emperor now began to understand too well the meaning of those words. He turned white, and collected his disordered mind with great effort.

"It is God's will," he said reverentially.

"Perhaps," doubted the general to himself. But aloud he said: "*Vorwärts!* It is war. Let us begin."

"But the Reichstag?" queried the Minister of War, trembling.

"I am the Reichstag and the people!" stormed the Emperor with a stamp of his spurred heel.

The decision had now become history. Dyspepsia had done its unparalleled work. Within two hours France had recalled her representative, and had begun to mobilize her enormous army; England to prepare her fleet; Russia to threaten with five hundred thousand Cossacks; Austria to mass her troops against — whom? Belgium and Luxembourg to totter; while Germany, ox-headed Germany, undismayed and stolid, challenged her hereditary foe.

Three days had not passed, and the million-headed dog of war was straining at its leash.

It was night, and not a shot had been fired. The two armies rested before the carnage that could not be delayed beyond the morrow. The valley lay darkly between the two camps. From the opposing hills a thousand fires shot gleams of hatred at one another. It was a starless night, and no reflection lighted the sluggish river that divided the valley and the armies.

Well-trained dogs with muffled mouths and velvet feet guarded the German outposts. The Wandering Jew could not have passed scent and sentry without imperative challenge. The countersign of the German line on that eventful night was given out at sunset gun by Von Eisenach and was received with peculiar agitation by the rank and file. "For Christ's sake" was repeated at many a summons of "Who goes there?" and it was noticeable that the words were never uttered carelessly, but invariably with a dreamy veneration for sacred things which is apt to surprise us a little in the Teutonic heart.

It was barely nine o'clock, and the vast camp was still alive with a quiet bustle. Regiments were pouring in, and were adjusting themselves with that calm exactitude peculiar to the discipline of the German army. Here sat a group about a tent, polishing their accoutrements to while away the time, and listening to one of their number singing Körner's "Sword Song" or Uhland's pathetic "Passage." Yonder, one almost stumbled over a dozen fellows, looking in the dark like will-o'-the-wisps glowing from their pipes, and telling in tender tones stories of their homes. None of the anxiety or forced gayety usual on the evening before the first battle was apparent. Raw recruits were as serene as scarred veterans. One listened in vain for words of hatred or curses against the French. It might have been the prestige of previous victory that tempered the soldier's

resentment, or it might have been the solemnity of the last night on earth that made bitterness seem irrational to the Lutheran nature. Whatever the cause, the motive of the war was strangely ignored in the conversation of the army. When heaven imperatively beckons from the mouth of a gun, what philosopher curses the misguided hand that pulls the trigger? But all men are not philosophers.

From a plain tent on the highest eminence electric lights burned. Within could be heard voices estimating distances, while in a lull an important, half-burned cigar would point out an eligible route across the map. Only the imperial standard, drooping disconsolately above the tent, revealed that it was the Emperor's, and the numerous aides-de-camp stationed in attendance testified that the last and the most important meeting of the Emperor's generals was convening.

"Here will we pin them; here will we annihilate them; over this road will we march upon Paris," said the Emperor proudly, marking the map with a pencil. He thought of Napoleon, and believed that the Corsican's genius of victory had leaped the Rhine and found a tenure in his own fate. His generals bowed their heads. They did not differ with him.

The camp was not yet asleep. Here and there, from artillery to cavalry, from sappers to infantry, from tent to tent, from group to group, from man to man, might have been seen the dim outline of a

flitting form which seemed bent upon some errand not in consonance with the situation. The effect that this person had upon the army was extraordinary. He seemed to intoxicate, not with the schnapps of brute power, but with the cordial of a mysterious inspiration. With a heart-moving longing to see him pass, men lay awake listening for his step. What genius is this to fascinate an army? When the man strode into the light some looked at him devoutly, others greeted him with quiet respect; all evidently held him in an awe which had a touch of the superstitious. And when he vanished into the blackness the men slipped silently into their blankets and dreamed prophetic dreams.

He was accompanied by no attendant, and, though by his dress a civilian, and oddly out of harmony with the uniformed camp, he seemed to grasp every detail with a military reminiscence. Had a spy followed his quick course through the camp, he would have observed that the stranger made little or no distinction between commissioned officers and the rank and file, treating every one with a republican affability. Could he have been a socialist, perhaps of kingly rank, who flattered the mob, and cajoled its chiefs to gain his unknown end? But no common plotter or iconoclast of thrones commands the reverence of his tools. Clearly this stranger had another mission than to destroy. That he too knew the watchword was evident, and when he gave it, the sacred speech

took to itself a meaning the significance of which more than one sentry may have divined.

A corporal saw him leave the tent of the Minister of War, and wondered not. A quartermaster beheld him enter the general's headquarters, and muttered, "It is well."

As the stranger made the rapid round of the huge camp, he left behind him on those he passed the spiritual impression of an oratorio. There came into dull faces the look of men who halt on a glad march to a festival. Are we to kill one another to-morrow? Impossible! Incredible! Forgotten!

On the outskirts of the camp the stranger walked up to half a dozen officers who were discussing in whispers the issues of the next day. They smiled with grave pleasure when they saw him approach, and hastened to meet him. They did not speak at first. Evidently these were the stranger's most intimate confidants. A wonderful smile touched his face as he leaned towards them.

"For the last time," he said gently, "we stand face to face. Your eyes ask the secret of my birth. Be content to know that power comes no longer of birth, or name, or riches, but of a holy aim. If I have opened to your eyes God's economy of nations, it is enough. Our work is almost done. Finish it, in the name of Him whose sacred pledge you wear upon the battlefield to-morrow. I give you my last command. Yield to no other alle-

giance than to mine for the short space of fifteen hours, and you have saved Europe, — perhaps the world. Obey! Obey, for Christ's sake! Nay; question me not, for I go from you. The hour has come."

As he spoke he melted from them. Neither the sentinels nor their dogs restrained him. He passed them by as if he were a cloud. At the brink of the river a boat was in waiting to convey him to the other side.

Who was this mysterious man who could penetrate palaces, awe generals, escape dungeons, and wield imperial power over an army of millions? Was he a spy, that he should pass to the French side at dead of night, give the countersign, be received with respect similar to that which he had just experienced, and proceed from outpost to sentry, from sentinel to earthworks, on to the camp, and thence to the tent of General la Guerre, the chief of all the French forces, second in command only to the President of the Republic? With what wild scheme had this adventurer entrapped the imagination of a continent? By what power had he controlled the undercurrent? Who was this religious fanatic? Whence his birth, his resources, his inspiration? Was he a man of gigantic fraud or of dedicated fate? Was he a madman, a genius, or a god?

It so happened that a sentry, piqued with curiosity, crawled upon his stomach and lifted the flap of the general's tent. What secret of state has he

overtaken? For what can he sell these whispers? By the light of a brilliant burner he sees a strange sight. The generals of the French army? Upon their knees? *Praying?* And in the midst of them the solemn stranger lifting up his hands and voice to heaven.

"And do thou, Heavenly Father, bless the work of these hands. Suffer it not to fail at the last hour. With the strength and the faith that thou hast given me, do thou anoint these. May the sublime victory of the crown be guided and blessed by thee. For Christ's sake." As the singular group rose from their knees he who had prayed uttered a last command.

"Let every possessor of the crown wear it openly upon his breast to-morrow, from the highest to the lowest man."

The eavesdropper, telling his beads and repeating many an Ave, had slipped to his post, and now presented arms. But the stranger, passing out into the dense night, observed him not. He walked on rapidly.

Ah! What is there? A sentry asleep! A light touch pins upon the left breast of the criminal a silver crown, and a gentle whisper wakens him. As the dreamer rubs his eyes, and stirs, he sees a stately figure flitting by. Beyond the last rampart, the last breastwork, the last patrol, the last electric sentry, it passes with the air of an angel whose work is well done.

At four o'clock the vast camp of the Germans was astir. At five o'clock six hundred thousand men breakfasted. At six o'clock the valley was still covered with a white mere of mist. At seven o'clock the artillery were ordered to train their mortars and pneumatic guns upon the French intrenchments eight miles or more away. At eight the subterrestrial torpedoes were in position, making an assault upon the German line an impossibility. The companies were drawn up in battalions, the battalions in divisions. Every private was armed with a bayoneted rifle that could fire a ball a second, which, when skillfully aimed, could pierce through five feet of flesh three miles away.

By this time the lake of mist scudded before the sun, and exposed what was about to become a tarn of fire.

The Emperor, impatient of glory, had no thought of resting upon the defensive, but, in order to force the fight himself, had ordered the guns to vomit their attack sharply at nine o'clock. He himself would give the word of command.

The Emperor had been born emotional; that is to say, his enthusiasm was of the fitful, nervous kind. He was forever groping, but after best things. He had successively attitudinized as a monarchist, a socialist, a reformer of scholarship, a patron of arts and of Jews. He had subsidized a merchant navy as insistently as he had treated for universal disarmament. To preserve international equilibrium he controlled a million of the best-drilled

troops in Europe. But in spite of his public protestations the secret ambition of his heart was about to be accomplished. To play the god of war is more heroically dramatic than to act the peasant of peace. So here he is — Frederick the Great and William I. *redivivus.*

Now the Emperor, in the enthusiasm of his maiden campaign, forgetting that modern victories are to be won from calculation in the tent rather than from *furore* on the battlefield, determined, as *generalissimo* of his army, to give the first deadly order in person. The potentate who lectured an eminent theologian on biblical interpretation found this natural. So, surrounded by his staff, he pranced from division to division, encouraging his men as a father should, — only, in this case, it was the father right royally giving up his children to be crushed by a death he did not share. From earthworks and batteries to outposts he had been received with respectful cheers. Still there was not enough manifestation to satisfy his vanity. He frowned.

"You cannot expect to receive the same enthusiasm, your Majesty," explained his Minister of War, with an apologetic cough, "in the uncertain period before victory that you will after. Many of these louts are imagining that they have shouted their last 'Hoch,' and are a bit downcast."

"Thunder and lightning! It is a great honor to die for the fatherland and for me," answered the Emperor hotly.

"No doubt they see it, your Majesty, but they have not yet learned to express it at the pinch," answered his Minister, with dry deference.

As the army stood attention, ready for the duty and the glory of the day, flecks of white could be seen glittering in the sunlight like interrupted lightning, flashing from breast to breast. This was not the sheen of buttons or the glare of arms, but the glitter of a new device. It danced along the immovable lines of cavalry; it lighted up long files of infantry; it started from officer to officer, and wound its brilliant coil from private to private until it enveloped the whole army. This strange white spangle could be seen to the best advantage when one looked diagonally along a file of men.

The rigid eye of the Emperor was quick to notice the new display, which the generals ostentatiously ignored.

"It seems to me my men wear a new decoration. It must be a very common order. Who dared confer it, Von Eisenach?"

"It is impossible for me to tell you, sire," replied Von Eisenach slowly. Stepping up to a petty officer, the Emperor sharply asked him: —

"What does this thing mean, corporal?" touching the source of offense contemptuously with his sword. Without hesitation the man courteously answered: —

"It is a charm given to me by my beloved, your Majesty, to protect life." He saluted, and stood blank attention.

"And thou — where didst *thou* get the thing from?" proceeded the ruler, looking darkly at the nearest private.

"My beloved, sire."

"And *thou?*" thrusting at the next.

"My beloved, also, your Majesty," answered the private stolidly.

Not a face changed expression. The Emperor was nonplused. He glanced beyond; everywhere the same decoration. There were a thousand of them in view.

But there was no time to lose in discussion: a parson's charm, no doubt; a crotchet, and not an infringement; a superstition, and not a treason.

"Jesu!" ejaculated the Emperor, with a smile, "has the whole regiment the same sweetheart?"

He laughed at the thought, and rode away. Then a sudden cold sweat swept his skin, he knew not why. His trained gaze had gone dull for the moment, and had not shown him that the silver crown nestled beneath a blazing order upon the breasts of Von Eisenach and Van der Weh. Why fret about a freak? The hour of his apotheosis was at hand.

He stood beside the gunners. The eyes of the staff, officers, and men regarded him furtively. There swept from picket to exploiting cavalry, from the hospital tents to the guns, from epaulet to knapsack, a thrill as if an epoch were at hand. It was afterward remembered that at this fateful moment the doctors of the ambulance corps,

who should have been whetting their "merciful, merciless" knives, had thrown aside their pipes, their novels, and their cards, and stood trembling, watches in hand. It was said that the nurses of the Red Cross, who should have been preparing cots and lint, had cast upon the floor their knitting or embroidery, and had, many of them, fallen on their knees in prayer. The Emperor himself felt this hidden agitation. Before him artillerymen stood as they were taught, expressionless. But an awful tension in every face told that their souls were freighted with the resolve of a great deed. Only the Emperor and the guns smiled; these guns of nickel and of steel, capable of silently dropping five hundred pounds of the most disastrous compound known to science ten, twelve, fifteen miles away, crouched like panthers, with grins of delight. Suppose each gun before it cracks slaughters only a hundred men who average three decades of existence each — the monster has imprisoned in his remorseless belly three thousand years of life.

The gunners stood with fingers upon the electric buttons ready for the word of command. The delicate pressure of a hundred forefingers might blot out how many centuries of precious thought? Yet the faces that should have been lighted with this magnificent opportunity were sternly set in an inflexible mould. The Emperor shuddered involuntarily as he had only shuddered once before in his life. That was at the Brandenburg Gate, not long ago. A vague feeling of terror smote him and

embarrassed him. He almost wished that he had prevented this hour. But with a violent wrench he cast off this sentimental emotion. He looked at his watch and gained courage from the approaching instant. As he bent his head the army drew a long breath, and the air seemed exhausted of its vitality.

Now the German Emperor raised himself proudly. His standard waved above him. He encountered a thousand pitying eyes, but he saw them not. He beheld victory. He straightened himself upon his war-horse. Nine o'clock, and Germany's moment had come. Every plan was complete. He threw rare majesty into his command.

"Now!" he cried. "*Ready!* FIRE!"

The President of France, like the Emperor of Germany, was by virtue of his high office commander-in-chief of the French army. This dignitary was not born to the purple, but a perfumer. At eighteen he became a feuilletonist; at twenty-five a politician; at twenty-eight the lover of a duchess, and rich. When he was thirty France declared war against Germany, and he enlisted with a commission; in three years, by reason of vacancies and valor, he was made a general; at forty-five he found himself Minister of War; and at fifty-one the President of the Republic. He had a well-defined ambition towards which he bent his whole soul, — the recovery of Alsace and Lorraine. In 1883 he happened, while on a furlough, to visit

a village school in Picardy. Hanging upon the door was a rude map of France of which an eastern portion was inclosed in a broad, black line. Underneath was this inscription: "Children, never forget Metz and Strassburg!" The incident affected him profoundly.

Older than the German Emperor, he was as ardent and as ambitious. He was the ideal product of a republic, and as such merited the contempt of the monarchist, which he was not slow to return. While waiting for his opportunity, with the patience of an ironmonger he had forged an army which Germany secretly feared and openly despised. Unwilling to court unpopularity by forcing a declaration of war, he was elated that the opportunity was now thrust upon him to punish Germany's impetuosity. His artillery was invincible. Russia was his willing ally, and he meditated the investiture of Berlin to his army in three months' time. He was as brave as he was imaginative, as cautious as he was aspiring. His only defect was the vanity of a *bourgeois* who has acquired distinction. But in his case it was of the American quality. It was vulgar. Flattering this weakness, his generals urged upon him the honor of making the first move. Thus it came about that the head of the French Republic, swelling with his importance, gave the orders to his gunners to fire, just as if he were a mere captain or sub-lieutenant, simultaneously with his imperial foe. With a coincidence in which there seemed to be

something more startling than mere fate, the titanic duel began with a synchronous thrust. On the eighth day of June nine o'clock struck momentously upon the ears of Europe.

We have said that the Emperor of the confederate principalities of Germany concentrated his majesty in that ringing command to begin the attack. He had rehearsed this thrilling moment to himself during the whole of the previous night, and now he flattered himself that the indomitable soul of all the Hohenzollerns blazed forth in his order to fire. He mentally closed his ears against the terrible concussion of a hundred rifled cannon. The ruler's face twitched with suppressed excitement. For a second after he gave his command he waited for its execution. Then he did not trust his senses.

Had the intoxication of the crisis sent him into insanity? He stared at the impassive gunners. These men, in whom the honor of Germany reposed, stood with military erectness in position. Their lips were compressed as if in martyrdom. They had not fired. What? No; not a shot! The imperial command disobeyed! The guns were as mute as abandoned sphinxes, and had an insulted air. Refused to obey? And in the very mouth of battle? Impossible! Death is the slightest penalty for such treason. What miasma had mounted to the delirious brains of these mutineers? Had their souls been purchased by the enemy, or

had a general paralysis overtaken them in the face of a hitherto underestimated foe? The Emperor could not credit his sight. In the nightmares to which every occupant of a throne is subject such a possibility had never been pictured. He passed his hand over his head as if to brush away this incubus of rebellion. Then he recovered himself; and with a voice made terrible by the vague apprehensions that tampered with the consciousness of his limitless power, he cried out: —

"Gunners! I command you! *Fire!*"

The gunners, tortured by the habit of discipline and by the ordeal of a mysterious motive, sweat great drops, and trembled. For whom were these a scapegoat? For whom this sacrifice? The army shuddered. One of the artillerymen fell fainting to the ground, such was his rack; but not one obeyed the Emperor.

At the sight of this extraordinary treason the Emperor shook with rage. He frothed at the mouth. He could hardly articulate. Nine o'clock had passed, and the attack was delayed. This incident was an ill omen for the day. Had the Emperor seen the faces of his army he would have reflected; but there was a clot upon his brain.

"Up guards!" he shouted. "Arrest these dogs! Let them be shot at sunrise! Forward, march!"

Fresh men took the traitors' places.

"Ready!" cried the Emperor, with suffused face. "Now! *Fire!*"

But these also refused obedience, and the pro-

testing guns were dumb. The young Emperor now divined that this was no ordinary rebellion. For what vain conceit did these misguided soldiers court death? Is it not easier to be cut down by the enemy than by one's brother? If wars are organized mobs for the dealing of death, there must be a nobler motive than gain to spur men to choose the ignominious rather than the glorious end. Ah, but to the dead ends are all alike.

"What means this hellish mutiny?" demanded the Emperor, little thinking that he was the sole actor in this battle scene. "Let them be shot on the spot!" Then, with an eagerness to afford a dramatic example, he rode at fierce gallop to the nearest cannon, with one thrust cut the gunner down, leaped from his horse, and completed the destructive circuit with the dripping tip of his sword. But no cylinder of death hurtled from the steel monster, nor groan from its wounded keeper. Had the guns been pledged to mutiny?

"Explain this devilish thing!" cried the Emperor to an officer standing near. As he spoke he advanced upon the lieutenant and shook him violently by the coat. In doing so he wrenched from the man's breast a badge, which remained in his infuriated hand. The officer did not alter his respectful attitude. His name will be canonized in history as that of the first one who made the revelation to his master. He looked at the Emperor steadily. His eyes grew stern and proud. There was a triumph in his voice, like Cromwell's

when at his spiritual height he daunted kings. He spoke with the orotund voice of a fogbell on a dangerous coast.

"It means, sire, that the armies of Germany have sworn by the silver crown you hold in your hand to commit no murder — for Christ's sake."

The Emperor looked stupidly from the officer to the silver crown. His sword fell with a thud to the earth. But, as yet, he did not understand.

"C–Captain of the Guards," he stuttered, "do your duty!"

"We will arrest, your Majesty, but we will not kill."

The Emperor shot confused glances from conspirator to conspirator. He had the ferocious, wandering expression of a grizzly bear when just caged and mocked by its tormentors. Then he burst the bars. He flung the burning badge far from him with a soldier's oath, and brandishing a swordless arm, he turned towards his staff.

"Van der Weh! Eisenach! Generals! Let the cavalry cut the traitors down. Command the infantry to advance, *instanter*."

There was a movement among these mounted generals as if the flood-gates had burst upon them. Motionless faces in the ranks turned rolling eyes towards the distinguished group. The Minister of War, whose indefatigable zeal had planned the campaign, stood before his colleagues and encountered the bloodshot eyes of his master. He looked upon the Emperor gently, and with a solemnity that cannot be described he said: —

"Your Majesty, we will command an advance for you, we will march for you, we will suffer and die for you, but the time has passed when we can persuade these soldiers, either for you or for any other king, to fire upon a man to kill him. On this they have sworn their oath."

The generals gravely nodded their assent to his extraordinary speech, and closed together. An electric thrill, leaping from file to file unto the farthest outpost, told the countless wearers of the silver crown that the crisis was at hand.

The Emperor stood at bay and snarled at his army.

"Is this then the meaning of your accursed crowns?"

"It is," answered Von Eisenach laconically.

At this moment a courier rushed forward with a telegraphic dispatch, and handed it to the monarch. It was from the general of the German forces on the northeastern frontier.

"We have met the enemy. The Russians refuse an engagement. Our soldiers will not fight. There can be no war here. Men desert to each other's camp by the thousand, and are carousing with joy. Foes have become brothers. Send instructions immediately. Shall we go home?"

This was signed by the general in command.

The Emperor dropped the paper listlessly. After a few moments he raised his eyes. They had a tamed look. Then the Emperor of Germany was heard to plead: —

"But, generals, soldiers, Germans, will you suffer yourselves to be cut down by the enemy? Will you not defend your lives and your homes against the cursed French?"

It was Van der Weh who answered.

"Sire, who are our enemies? We will defend our lives and our homes when swords are at our throats. But wantonly kill we will not, for we cannot. We have sworn it, for Christ's sake."

Then the monarch bent to the blow. He trembled like a baby. He put his hands to his face, and tears trickling through his fingers told his soldiers that a great military heart was broken.

Now there hurried into camp a second courier waving a white standard of truce, and bearing a letter from the President of France to his imperial foe.

"Read it to me, Van der Weh," said the Emperor, not looking up. The Minister read it aloud, omitting all preliminary titles.

"There is a devilish conspiracy in my camp. Not a man will fight. *Sacré bleu!* What does this mean? I will not surrender. May I have the honor of an audience with your Majesty immediately? We are undone. All hell is loose. Pardon my lack of ceremony, your Majesty. I pray that you may meet me between our intrenchments at twelve, or I go mad."

"He mistakes; it is heaven that is loose," murmured Van der Weh under his mustache.

The Emperor bowed his head and merely ejacu-

lated: "I will go alone. Let us have no witness to that meeting."

This, then, was the stranger's mystery. What? Europe? Hot-blooded, jealous Europe refuse to fight? It was preposterous, incredible! Nay, it was ridiculous. Thirty milliards of francs in France; twenty-five billions of marks in Germany; incalculable billions of taxes in Russia — this treasure, wrung from hopeless peasants, spent for no fight? Not even one calamitous shot! Only one man in Europe wounded, and that by his master because he would not spend the deadly shell for which the best years of his manhood had been taxed. Go, deluded soldiers! Trained for nothing but to kill and to be killed, you have cut the ladder beneath you; but you have thrown ambition, advancement, glory to the angels that your children shall be saved.

This, then, had the nameless enthusiast done. There is a law higher than the will of emperors which the enlightened heart obeys. The godlike mission, starting with a handful, had become a fanaticism in comparison with which the Mohammedan belief was a zephyr. It had developed into a hurricane, sweeping from army to army, through states and empires, until the military world was pledged to peace. How was the secret of this gigantic purpose concealed beneath so calm a front? The unique personality of this stranger, trusting in his mission and in the religious common-sense of the modern intellect, had "conceived

the inconceivable," had overcome the unconquerable, and had achieved the impossible. Only an exalted few among a hundred army corps were ignorant of this divine secret, — the emperors of Russia and of Germany, the President of France, and a few others.

Fanaticism, that great conserver of ideas, kept the conspiracy from the press and from the world as carefully as the catacombs of Rome hid the presence of believers in Christ. It is said, further, that every wearer of the crown was pledged by his oath to conceal its import from sister, from sweetheart, from mother, and from wife. There were not wanting a few cynics who attributed the success of this stupendous achievement chiefly to that clause in the oath.

Thus two enormous armies, equipped with the most recent invention for massacre, confronted each other in this absurd position. Soldiers had marched who knew that they could not fight. Generals had led who knew that they were to command no assault. Only two chiefs were ignorant that there was not a rifle but had its charge of blank cartridges; that there was not a machine gun, a mortar, a rifled gun, dragged to its commanding position with incredible labor, but had its charge of God's harmless air, and nothing more. The enlightenment had been delayed until this hour in order that the dramatic revelation might be the more readily digested by the world. Nations forget many a lesson, but never a farce. It is too readily repeated.

Now, the Emperor did not notice that his army regarded the plain beneath them with more than ordinary attention. He raised his head wearily to Von Eisenach, who was supporting him, and asked: —

"Where is he who is chief of this terrible order? I would speak with the Master of Europe. What is his name?"

The general tenderly turned the stricken Emperor, and pointed before him. The monarch dumbly followed the direction of his officer's finger. On an eminence beneath them, and between the two camps, stood a man of imposing stature. Even at so great a distance he seemed to be surrounded by a halo of dignity that lifted him above ordinary men. Von Eisenach whispered reverently to his royal companion: —

"We do not know his name, but he is called by us the Prince of Peace."

The Emperor trembled, but did not speak. Even as he gazed, the stranger moved. He lifted up his hands above him. One hand seemed to hover over the French army, the other over the German camp. It was a benediction, and he blessed them into one. As he stood with outstretched hands, the armies knelt. They tried to shout. They could not. Only the sounds of weeping fell upon the sunlight. As he saw a million men upon their knees the stranger smiled.

But even as he blessed the kneeling armies a white mist strode down the valley. Softly, like a

dream, it approached the stranger. Not a soul stirred. Not an eye wavered from the fascination of the transcendent sight. The cloud swept over the man of mystery. It clothed him. Only his outstretched arms appeared. It enveloped him, and it passed on.

What of the stranger? Fame sought him, and found him not. Those who saw him, who heard his voice, who try to recall a marvelous personality that mysteriously evades the memory even when the eyes are closed, say that when an impious nation threatens war he will come again.

The manuscript of the preceding pages has recently been found between the covers of an old Latin folio presented to the British Museum by the estate of a distinguished scholar. It is supposed to have been a report on the abolition of war from the world, written for the British Historical Society. This report was, it is thought, rejected because it was compiled in too impassioned and imaginative a style, and with an obvious lack of that judicial impartiality which this association found necessary to the preservation of its constitution.

The publication of this ancient and valuable record of a great historical event in which the world has long since had common cause to feel the profoundest interest is hopefully ventured.

Office of the "World at Peace." LONDON, March, 2894.

THE SEMAPHORE.

SUMACH JUNCTION was the outpost of a huge city system. The proud suburbs halted just a mile away, nor could they be persuaded to advance nearer to the broad malarious meadow, to the acres of sandhills that bounded it, and to the sluggish river that, like the Concord, was too lazy to grind the corn that grew upon its banks.

Sumach Junction was only fourteen miles from the city. The "limited" snorted the distance in twenty minutes. Yet it was a desolate place, shunned by all but railroad men and travelers who were unfortunate enough to have to change cars for South Sumach. The Junction, or rather the town, was made up of only a few dreary wooden houses, and these straggled up track No. 2, or down track No. 1, until they were lost under the sandhills or around the sullen bend of the river. In the heat of the summer and in the radiance of the autumn, Sumach Junction was noteworthy and oriental in its blaze of purple foliage and scarlet fruit. Stern New England nature, repenting of its niggardly coloring, gave us one genus in a glorious order of tropical trees; and our Junction, as its name implies, made the most of her generosity. Some æsthetes might have deprecated the

vivid contrast of orange and yellow and crimson with the dingy green of the wooden station-house and with the faded brown of the signal-tower and the gray of the overtopping sandbanks; but the station-master, who was a station-mistress, with a passion for geraniums and roses, and for making her barren world beautiful, had no such thought, and she propagated the sumachs from cuttings until there was not a square inch of earth under her control but was brilliant with these passionate shrubs.

But winter, the eternal symbol of jealousy, revenged itself of this fertile beauty with harsh chuckles, and the station-mistress cried every fall as the sumachs withered away, leaving the Junction in a state of ugliness and barrenness that seemed to every one else in natural conformity to the surroundings and appropriate to the New England climate. Then, when the trees were stripped, and the dried clusters of berries swayed piteously to the gale, the two-storied, square signal-tower commanded the attention that perhaps it deserved, and the one-storied station-house under its lee protested with a few potted geraniums in the window against an unkempt appearance as well as against a secondary position.

For the signal-tower, rectangular, with rows of windows on all sides, stood at the intersection of many branches. At this point the trunk line resolved itself from four tracks into two; and here the gravel track, which looked as if it had been

laid by a palsied contractor, left the main line and respectability behind and hobbled out of sight behind the signal-station with an intoxicated air. Beneath the tower, to the right, a double-tracked branch tapped a fertile country beyond the sand-hills. And beneath the signal-tower, to the left, a single-tracked branch, only a mile long, brought South Sumach, one of those tiresome towns that manufacture on a water-power, in touch with the middleman. This petty branch (as if the case had been with petty people) made more trouble than all the rest of the lines put together. The signal-men found this out. So Sumach Junction had its place in the world, and perhaps it was a more important one than that of many a complacent and opulent suburb. The heart of this little community did not centre, as a thoughtless person might suppose, in the church, or the commandery, or the grocery store, or the school, but in the signal-tower. It was the pulse of the section. It was the life-blood of thousands of unconcerned travelers whose lives and happiness depended on the intelligent vigilance of three men. These three took turns up there in the tower, locking and unlocking switches and signals, until one might expect them to faint for dizziness and confusion.

It was the winter of the grippe, and Matt Nolan was taken down as if he had been struck by an engine. The grippe has a waltz movement, and, like Strauss, a genius for variations on one theme. We need not pad the subject when we say that

Matt had that form of this malady which is popularly known as the brain-grippe.

It was no uncommon thing in the signal-tower, when one of the three wanted a day off, for the other two to double up on twelve-hour shifts. As long as the service was well performed, the superintendent asked no questions.

"I guess we can stand it a few days, until Matt gets 'round," said Fred Joyce as he handed over his pipe and his duties to his relief. Joe Stringer nodded. He was a tall fellow with character lines upon a face that once had been of the laughing and careless mould, but which nine years of responsibility had now dignified. His blue eyes were deep-set and serious and piercing, like those of a seaman. With practiced adroitness he threw three heavy levers and shoved them back to their places with his foot.

"Let her go," he said; "we don't want no stranger stuck on us in here. I can stand it as long as you can. I guess Matt 'll be 'round soon."

With a confident expression upon his face, he started at four in the afternoon on his new time.

At four o'clock in the morning he was relieved. Fred came in, saying that Matt's brain was improving, and that he would come around in a few days perhaps. Joe Stringer passed over a couple of train orders, and without talk started home. He was impatient to throw off the long strain. He felt it more than usual. Generally he came in at midnight, and his wife had a cold supper wait-

ing for him in the kitchen. He was careful not to wake her or the baby.

Joe Stringer lived about a half mile from the tower. His cottage was on the other side of the river, past a boat-house with a flag-pole and a willow-tree; the house lay a hundred yards or so back from the stream on an oak knoll. In winter his eyes, trained to the smallest signal on the distant poles, could easily distinguish his white gables in an opening among the trees. Evening after evening, as he stood to his levers, he watched for the first gleam from the lamps; and the last thing when his wife went to bed, she signaled to him from the low second story window, telegraphing with a light as he had taught her.

It was such a cosy home! His wife was perfectly happy there in summer. The abundant shade, and the endless variety of boats and parties upon the river, and the echo of mad laughter and songs at night pleased her. It was a very gay river. But in winter Joe's home was a trifle remote, and he tried to make it up to Mary in home attention and tenderness, during the daytime, so that she should not be lonely at night. He had not yet forgotten, as some men do after a few years of married life, how he had wooed his wife; how he had won her, when he was a telegraph-operator, away from the conductor of a Western express. Surely he had made her happy? And she deserved a hundred times the love he was not tired of lavishing upon her. And then, their home was nearly paid for.

Joe walked up the frozen river in the dead, dark night, avoiding the well-known air-holes, and thinking about Matt, and how not to wake the baby. There was a light upstairs that he did not understand. He pushed in through the back door softly. The kitchen was warm; the water in the kettle was singing. But his usual supper was not spread. Surprised at this neglect, he passed into the front hall to call upstairs. His arctics and rough ulster were still on.

"Is that you? Oh, Joe! Sh——!" There, at the head of the straight, steep stairs, stood his wife. The lamp in her hand lit a face pale and frightened. "Oh, Joe! where have you been all this time? I expected you at twelve." She put the lamp down on the floor, and sat on the first stair and burst into tears.

Joe bounded up.

"Mary! What is it? For God's sake! It is n't the baby?" He took up the lamp and followed her into their room. He ran to the crib. There lay their baby, their only child, strangling for breath.

"What 's the matter?" asked Joe stupidly.

"Croup!" All the horror of a young mother for that word was in her tone. "He 'll die! He 'll die! God is going to take away my baby."

"He shan't do it!" observed Joe, setting his teeth. He started forward to take up the child tenderly, to fold it under his ulster. He could n't wait to take that off, he felt so. But she snatched his hands away.

"Doctor says he must n't be moved. Don't you touch him, Joe! Leave him in his crib; he 'll get a chill. Why, your cold overcoat might chill him to death."

"Well," said Joe, abashed and backing away, "I never thought of that. Anyhow, I 'll take care of him. You go rest, Mary. I 'll call you if he gets worse. Poor dear, you are so tired! Don't you fret, Mary. I say he 's *got* to get well."

He led his wife to their bed, and covered her up. She was worn out with fright and care, and fell suddenly asleep. All through the cold dawn, far into the gray morning, Joe watched the baby, rocking the crib, and doing what he could. The child was quieter with him. He was such a tender man, instinctively knowing what the baby wanted.

When Mary opened her eyes, long past breakfast-time, the sight of the brown ulster and the sound of the terrible croup chased the confused memories from her aching head. Joe's blue eyes were feverish and brilliant.

"If you will take baby," he said slowly, "I will light the fire. He 's easier now. You see Matt is down, and Fred and I are taking his time. Mebbe I 'd ought to get a wink or two to-day. — I guess that 's the doctor's sleigh."

. . . . . .

It was exactly four o'clock to the minute when Joe Stringer entered the tower. It was forty-eight hours since he had started on his first twelve-hour time to relieve Matt. It was thirty-six hours

since he had gone home to find the baby dying. This was then his third shift of twelve hours, and Matt was said to have a relapse.

A signal-man is not on hand one minute too soon or one minute too late. Twelve hours of responsibility demand the quality of being "on time" which is imperative in the railroad world, and so rare outside of it. And Joe had not slept since he took Matt's time. The previous shift had gone well enough. His regular habits and the excitement had kept him to his duty. But this afternoon he came up the stairs, pale, haggard, and ghastly, and confronted the inexorable row of levers. For the first time in his life he loathed the tower and its peremptory call to nervous activity.

That baby — dying at home! He could see it writhe. His mental sight contemplated the child's death-agony continually. Yet at the resistless stroke of the hour of four he could no more stay at home than if he were handcuffed and dragged to prison.

Now for the first time in nine years that straight row of levers, the red, the blue, the green, and the black, became blurred to his eyes and meaningless to his mind, just as they would have to a visitor's. Joe Stringer brushed his hand over his forehead with a trembling, irresolute motion, and then began his duties by mechanically pulling the cord above his head. The electric bell was persistently ringing the approach of an express, now due and out

of sight around the up-curve a mile or more away. Joe jerked the shut-off peremptorily. The bell impertinently rang out. Again he gave the cord a pull. It seemed as if he could not bear the rattle. It wrought a new confusion in his head, and with a final twitch he snapped out an oath.

"Ye hit her that time, Joe," said his mate, taking a firm hand off the distant signal. "There 's 72 waiting for water; the 'commodation is twenty minutes. I think it 's a-goin' to snow."

He held out his hot pipe, as he was wont, to Joe, and turned to put on his overcoat. But Joe was peering out of the side window, toward the white, gabled cottage, beyond the boat-house, up the river. It could be plainly seen through the branch of the willow-tree that the curtain in the second story was up. Although Fred Joyce did not see Joe's face, the hopelessness of its stare and the twitching outline of its shrunken cheek refined the signal-man's imagination. His pipe fell from his outstretched hand.

"Why, Joe!" he cried, "is the kid worse?"

Joe nodded slowly, and when he turned to set the signals at safety for the express, Fred saw that his eyes were full.

"Yes, Fred; the doctor says he 's a-goin' to die. Mary is goin' to pull the curtain down when he 's gone."

The express swept by and the tower vibrated.

"Ain't ye had no sleep, Joe?" Fred Joyce had been watching his mate critically as Joe set the

signals back at danger with automatic listlessness. Joyce himself was pale and overworked. It was no light thing to be on duty twelve hours on a stretch in that station. Even he was almost exhausted.

"No," answered Joe curtly. "*She* had to sleep, an' I rocked the baby. I hain't had none yet."

"Look here, Joe," said Joyce, putting his hand on Joe's arm, "do you mean to say you hain't slept at all durin' my shift?"

"Good God! How could I?" exclaimed Joe fiercely. "She had to sleep, I tell you, and then I had to tend the baby and the house. I could n't have slept nohow with the baby makin' that noise in its throat — poor thing! Poor little thing!" He unlocked a switch, and flung it back with a resonant thud, and then, in the phrase of the tower, "gave 'em" the signal. A gravel-train staggered slowly down the side track.

It was beginning to snow. The flakes would come coquettishly, a few at a time, and then hold up. At this moment a little flurry swept by the tower, and obscured from view Joe's house on the other side of the river in the grove of skeleton oaks. The boat-house vanished, and the flag-pole with it. Even the willow was blotted from sight. Fred had put on his arctics and overcoat, and now came up to the other end of the tower. For an instant he stood with his hand resting on the signal called "the route." Joe was standing near him by the window. Plainly he was enduring the ter-

rible. If he only knew whether the baby were alive or dead, he could have borne the strain for one more night before he dropped. But that cloud of snow, shutting him away from the death-signal at home, — it was more than his beaten courage could bear. He uttered a dry groan.

Joyce gave one more glance at the shaking figure, and then, shutting his lips, sat down at the telegraph instrument. Joe's trained ear caught the message as it started over the wire.

"I ain't no boy!" He came up to the table and brought his fist down upon it so hard that the clay pipe danced a jig. "I say, I can stand it like a man to-night. I won't have you wire the superintendent for relief. You stop it! I say I ain't no boy." He glared out of bloodshot eyes at his mate.

Now Fred Joyce looked at him with real apprehension. Joe was no spendthrift of oaths and temper, like the rest of them. He was sunny, and of wholesome disposition. The thought that grief and sleeplessness had unbalanced him flitted across the operator's mind. His first impulse had been to relieve Joe for Joe's own sake; but now a darker anxiety possessed his mind. Joe must be relieved for the sake of the Road. So much was growing clear. A man who had not slept for forty-eight hours was in no fit condition to control the night traffic. The experienced signal-man thought it unsafe.

"If he can send up a sub only for the night,

you can go home and see yer kid," said Fred, telegraphing vigorously. But Joe had gone to the window, and moodily shook his head.

"Click. Clicketty-click. Click-*click*." The telegraph jerked out the answer decidedly.

"I told ye so," said Joe fiercely. "Now, ye'd better go home." He threw five levers backward and forward in rattling succession. The freight swung on to track No. 2, and puffed inward. Impulsively Joe threw the signals back to danger. His face was listless and pinched. It was almost expressionless, and would have been quite so, but for something that crossed his fixed and staring eyes.

The superintendent had wired back that he was sorry, but he was tied up and could send no one to-night. It was impossible; but he would try to get a man there at eight the next morning. There was no help for it.

"Look here, Joe," said Fred, with a look of great disappointment. "I'm going home, and I will spell you at eleven. I'll turn right in, and seven hours is good 'nough for me. I guess you can stand that, hey?"

Joe stood with his right foot on the latch, and his right hand rigidly clasping one of the black levers. The snow flurry had passed, and his cottage was clean-cut in the distance. The curtain in the gable window was up, and the baby was still alive. Fred's glance followed his companion's. He waited for an answer, reluctant to leave. Then

with an oath, more of sympathy than of impatience, he tramped downstairs. Joe had not heard him go. Somehow his senses could grasp but one detail at a time. When he turned he found himself alone. He drew a deep breath.

To-day he was glad to be alone. After all, the service in the signal-tower was monotonously exciting. Each day brought the same trains, the same combinations and complications. The signalman was the intellect of the line at Sumach Junction. He had to be alert, masterful, and imaginative. Enormous interests were subject to his fidelity and control. Therefore he was a picked man. For him to render a false signal became a capital crime. The engineer who disobeyed a signal was liable to dismissal, if not to imprisonment on the charge of manslaughter. What respect must he not have for the signal-giver himself? Matt was impatient sometimes, and let down the windows, and swore at the engineers. Joe did not. Yet it is remembered that once upon a time he gave an open signal for a side-tracked freight to proceed inward, and when it refused to obey and go, he unlocked the switch and set the little semaphore at danger, and held the freight there for five hours, until the engineer came up and humbly apologized and begged to be let off, for he was paid by the trip. When Joe ordered he was not to be trifled with. His steel levers were steel lips, and woe to him who disobeyed their sacred command. But this successive and, at night-time,

progressive responsibility, this feverish repetition, became dull. Callers were apt to be many, and were welcomed as a relief to the fussy tedium.

For the first time, this afternoon, Joe prayed that no one would come. He felt that he had the hardest struggle of his life before him. It seemed to him that he could not bear the warm greetings, the rough jokes, the trenchant gossip, even the ready sympathy or the sudden train orders which were wont to deluge him with eager rapidity. What was comfort to him three days ago became vivisection now. To-night he needed all his nerves concentrated on those pitiless levers. A word, so tremulous his mind, might precipitate it. He was like a man taking nitrous oxide. He knew he was conscious, but the knowledge of his consciousness was like a dream. He began to contest the boundary of somnambulism. It was a duel between duty and dishonor, between life and death, between will and overwhelming sleep.

Now these interlocking switches protect the operator as well as the rolling-stock. It was lucky that they did so, this dark afternoon; for, after Joe had let a certain train go by, he could not recall the puzzling combination, so familiar to him, by which it was dispatched. And yet, when the next train rang in, the emergency evoked the law, and his trembling arms did what his brain refused.

Six o'clock came, and the station-mistress climbed the stairs laboriously to tell him she had heard about the baby, and how sorry she was. She

brought him a pink geranium blossom to comfort him, and went away.

Seven o'clock came, and with it his supper. A neighbor brought his pail, and told him that the baby was still alive. The good woman found Joe so surly and distracted that she clean forgot the loving messages from Mary, Joe's wife, and, lifting up her skirts on high, she hurried down the oily, tobacco-laden stairs, muttering that he might at least have thanked her for her trouble.

The fact of it was, the bell was ringing up the approach of another train. He had become as afraid of the sound of that warning bell as he was of an engine running "wild." With heart sinking he looked at the clock, and knew perfectly well the number of the train then due. To the railroad esoteric trains are only numbers. He was about to give this train the correct switch, when, to his consternation, his brain seemed to be going around in a huge wheel. On one of the spokes was written the number of that train, and his thoughts found it impossible to run it down. The shadow of this elusive memory darkened his whole mind. Where was he? Blindly he set the route and home signals at safety. His hands seemed to know that it was not an express approaching, and therefore there was no need to "set the distant." The headlight cast its parallel reflections at him up the track. He glared at it questioningly. Then the sound of the rumbling of many empty cars unlocked his torpid brain. Freight No. 63! Thank God, he

had done the right thing. The sweat broke out upon his eyebrows and chilled his forehead. He had the muscular apprehension and the nausea that follow nervous shock and the recoil from familiar noises. He felt that he was going to be very sick. But how soon? The insidious symptoms of arbitrary drowsiness were as strange to him as the giddiness of sea-sickness.

As the freight passed he suddenly found himself upstairs in his own room, holding the gasping baby. Then he was aware of the fact that he was swaying over a precipice. With a cry he stretched out his hands. What did they clutch? Levers No. 23 and 24! He brought his head up with a start, and stared out of the side window defiantly. He was in his signal-tower, and he challenged any one who said that he slept upon his post.

Now, to his surprise, the white and green and red lights seemed to be whirling around in a mad dance.

"I forgot," he said helplessly, "I must be hungry."

It was very dark outside, and the light from the little window up the river blinked at him like a fair star. The baby was alive. Joe kissed his hand to the light, and then sat down before his tin pail at the telegraph table. He felt unutterably drowsy after the first mouthful, which happened to be a bite of mince-pie, that had been carefully laid on top so as not to spoil the crust. It was the first time that his eyes had even closed for thirty-six

hours. The snow began to fall heavily, with that mysterious silence so different from all similar meteorological manifestations, and which gives it a magic as well as a poetic quality. Joe's head rested on the table only a few inches from the telegraph instrument. He had not been in that position five minutes before the click called him. Although his ears had not comprehended the message, perhaps not even apprehended it, his vigilant mind repeated it to him, and nagged him, until with a violent effort of his will he cast off the locking yoke of sleep. Instinctively his fingers sought the keys, while his other hand drew a blank from the drawer.

"Why don't you repeat?" came the imperative demand. It was a train order from the superintendent. Joe became immediately alert. Every nerve began to quiver with responsibility. The order ran: —

"To No. 114: — We understand we may use fifty-five minutes' time over train No. 20." This was signed by the division superintendent, the conductor, and engineer of the freight in question.

Joe gave a trivial reason for his inattention, and demanded a "repeat." When this came he repeated it back. According to the rules no order is valid until repeated and "O. K.'d" — this is the phrase — by the sender and receiver.

"O. K.," came back the message.

"O. K.," answered Joe with a sigh, signing the order on the table and shoving it away from him.

"Hullo, Joe!" There was a stamping and shak-

ing of snow, accompanied by a strong ejaculation expressive of the state of the weather. "Hullo there! Wake up!"

It was the conductor of a "local," come in for a moment to get warm.

"I ain't asleep," snarled Joe with savage emphasis. "Wake up, yourself!"

The conductor stared at him with great curiosity. Why, Joe was the best-natured man on the road. What had come over him?

"D—— it, I didn't suppose you was. Can't you take a joke?"

"No! Not that kind," replied the signal-man with a suspicious scowl. His ears sang so loud as almost to stop their power of hearing. He steadied himself at his levers, and, feeling a little ashamed of himself, — for, after all, the conductor did not know that he had almost been asleep, — he asked: "Well, what's up?"

"Nothing, only 20 is 1.55."

Joe nodded. "I just got the order to give 114 55."

"I guess 20 is nearer 2. The blockade must be pretty heavy in the West. How's signals working?"

"All right, so far," Joe replied, as he swung the "local" off the main line around the curve and then set the switches back to their normal positions.

"How's Matt? I hear he's stark luny with the grippe. How's your kid?" The conductor went up to the telegraph instrument and took up the half-smoked clay pipe and lighted it.

The kid? Was it possible that Joe had for a moment forgotten his dying baby? He went toward the window. His tall figure bent to look out. He dropped the upper sash with an anguished exclamation. The silent snow now came down like a dead wall between him and his wife's message. In the darkness and the density of the storm he could hardly see the other side of the four tracks. Was the child alive or dead? He paced about the room restlessly, trying all the windows. He could not even see the geraniums in the depot. He went back to the front windows of the tower. A red switch signal cast a bar of light that cut the railroad at right angles. Joe's eyes followed that clear gleam until it dissipated itself in the distance. The flakes of snow turned to drops of blood as they passed through the colored rays. Joe did not hear the conductor strike the clogged pipe against the edge of the dusty table. He did not notice a commonplace question that was addressed to him. He was looking at the crimson flakes stupidly. His eyes became fixed. His head sat rigidly on his neck. He had often noticed crystals of gold falling before the head-light of a locomotive. But blood! blood!

"No. 42 is 13!" The conductor, receiving no answer, had some time since hastened down to his train, and now a brakeman stamped up with this order, and beat his hat against the railing at the top of the stairs. The train-hand was about to expand this information when he was startled by a guttural cry.

"Oh! My God!"

The young man ran to the window and shook Joe's arm. The entranced signal-man turned on him lustreless eyes, whose black mirrors had inundated the blue iris.

"Is he dead?" cried Joe.

"Who dead? 'T ain't Matt, is it? What's the matter with you? Wake up, Joe!"

"What 's the matter with *you?*" Joe wrenched himself violently away. The man who had not slept for forty-eight hours suddenly saw realities with his open eyes. An expression of horror and then of wonder crossed his sunken face, just as it happens to one who comes out of a hypnotic state. "I thought" — he said slowly. "Why, Mike! Hullo! What 's the news? Ha! ha! ha! D—— it, I was n't asleep. Express No. 20 is 1.55 late, and I 've got orders to give freight 114 fifty-five minutes."

Mike, the brakeman, eyed the signal-man with shrewd curiosity. "He hain't drunk," he muttered to himself; "he never did drink, 'cos he 's married, I s'pose. I 'll bet he 's got the la grippe. Are you all right now?" he said aloud. "I told you 42 is 13. Put that in your pipe and smoke it."

There came the impatient tooting of a whistle, and the brakeman, with a reluctant expression, hurried out.

Again Joe was left quite alone. No one was liable to drop in now. He glanced at the clock. It was nearly nine. He had only a little over two

hours to wait for his relief. He did his best to look his situation coolly in the teeth. He felt exactly as he did once while he was going under the influence of ether. He had tried braking for a week, and got a jam in the leg. He understood his condition. He felt that he was liable to go under at any moment. Fight it! Fight it like a man! This thought whirled around his brain a hundred times, until he suddenly awoke to find that he had been battling with unconsciousness in his sleep.

The night was growing wild and wilder. The snow began to drive viciously. Joe knew that at such times as these the running schedule of the Road must necessarily be thrown completely out of gear, and that a tie-up might occur at any moment. In such contingencies it needed the sharpest wits of the man at the signal-tower to keep things moving in order.

Now, in point of fact, Joe was fully competent to be superintendent of the division. He had the peculiar quality of generalship that is as indispensable to railroad management as the telegraph itself. In emergencies he had saved the Road many a valuable hour by his prompt decisions and many a dollar by his strategetic combinations. It was no easy matter at Sumach Junction to know how and when to dispatch trains. It required intuition, experience, and a steadiness of nerve that would wear out an ordinary man in a week's time. As the signals were set in their normal state "at

danger," so was Joe's life keyed to apprehension.

"Five minutes," said Nelson, "may make the difference between victory and defeat." Five seconds at the signal-tower at Sumach Junction may make the difference between security and appalling death. Joe was young and courageous. He was thirty, and in the zenith of his self-confidence.

No. 42 was a New York express, and it was thirteen minutes late. It was therefore due at Sumach Junction at twenty-six minutes past nine o'clock. This great Road, which boasted of never having killed a passenger through its own negligence, never allowed its expresses to make up a minute of lost time. If the schedule were broken, trains must conform to their new time.

Then there was the freight No. 114. Since the Chicago express was an hour and fifty-five minutes late, the freight was given fifty-five minutes' run on the delinquent's time. Thus it came about that the freight was due at any time within a half hour. Joe felt as confused as any uninitiated reader of this page by all these familiar changes, and dreaded lest any more new instructions might be telegraphed him. He had a few minutes to himself, and, not knowing why, he went downstairs, and brought up one of the red lanterns that were kept lighted in the oil-room below.

"You never can tell," he said to himself.

Then he went to the western windows of the tower. The blinding snow seemed to be turning

into frozen sleet. Outward the tracks wound up a hill, and an inward train on track No. 2 when the bell rang its approach could usually be seen with ease from the tower across the valley, two miles away. But to-night Joe could not even see the route signal. The two vertical white lights of the home signal were invisible.

That white semaphore, outstretched, dove-tailed, with its blunt finger guarding the Road, was an old friend of Joe's. When it was set horizontally at danger, Joe's easy imagination used to think that it pointed straight at his own cottage. Then he would follow the line of vision and see the curtain up; and once every hour or so during his afternoon and evening watches his wife was in the habit of waving a white handkerchief or a white light before the window; then he smiled, and knew that the home signal, though set at "danger" for the Road, was set at "safety" for him. How many, many nights this pretty conceit brought comfort to the man of the steel levers! Joe loved the inward home signal with a superstition that is not unusual to railroad men. It was the No. 2 lever that operated it, and about the only one that never got out of order. That also was a good omen, for he and his wife never quarreled. But to-night his baby was dying, perhaps dead, over there in the storm, and he felt that the home semaphore had betrayed him. He could not formulate this thought, but it pounded in his brain, and he regarded that red lever with lowering sus-

picion. He stood with one foot on the latch, with his left hand on the "distant," with his right guarding the "home," with his pipe smouldering between his teeth — he stood — he swayed — he gained his equilibrium — his lids dropped — and then he fell into a doze like a soldier who sleeps upon the march.

What strange dreams! Was he in another world? What! Railroads in heaven? The same ringing, insistent bell? The same signals? Could it be that in Paradise he had to throw the "route," and the "home," and the "distant" at safety for the express? That was not the idea of heaven to which he had been brought up in the Baptist Church. Then the rumbling escape of steam. The deep inhalations of a curbed engine! The shriek of the brakes, and the jerk of the stand-still! What a natural world heaven is! Quick question — oaths and hurried answers, and the pounding of steps up the stairs!

"Hullo there! Hullo!"

Joe awoke with a start. He thrust his hands over his eyes and turned wildly around. He had the feeling kindred to that of a wild animal at bay before human intelligence. What had he done? Good God! Had he been asleep?

"What's up? What's up?" he cried in a husky voice. Perhaps this was a dream too.

"We blew out the cylinder head," said the conductor of the New York express with a grave face. "Wire delay! We may pull out, or we

may not. What a —— night to get stuck! I 'll let you know later."

Joe rushed to the front windows. Passengers were swarming out and bothering the conductor and engineer with anxious and silly questions.

The roar of steam, vibrating as if there were a tunnel under the track; the lights from the brilliant parlor-car windows athwart the sardonic snow; the discontented faces of aristocratic ladies peering out of mahogany frames; the increasing groups of men as they flocked in the storm to the engine; the flickering oil torch lighting up the strong and sober face of the engineer; the elegant conductor looking at his watch calculatingly in the light of his own lantern; the passengers huddling behind and around him in the blast — these formed a series of pictures that engraved themselves upon Joe's excited mind. It seemed to Joe that the express had been flung at him as if from a dark stage trap.

But how did the train get there? How could it disobey the danger signals? Joe jumped to his levers.

As has been said, all signals are kept at danger, and unless they are set to safety, the train must stop before them. When a train approaches on a clear track, the signals are set at safety toward it; first the "route," next the "home," and last the "distant." As the last car passes the drooping semaphores successively, these wooden fingers are raised to danger again in reverse order: first the

"distant," next the "home," and last the "route," which is adjacent to the signal-tower itself.

Joe stared at the levers. His tortured, sleepless brain had not dreamed a dream; for the distant signal, No. 1, was thrown back to danger, and the red home and route were still at safety, showing that a train had just been sent through. Joe had done his duty while his body slept, and he had been awakened even while he was about to clang back the "home" to danger. He could not recall the facts; but the unlying levers confronted him with their steel story.

Instantly he threw the whole weight of his body on the home lever, to cast it back. The red bar started, it yielded, and then, as if it had encountered an irresistible spring, it halted midway. Joe brought the lever to him, and regarded it incredulously. No. 23 had often stuck this way, but No. 2 never. With an oath he cast himself at it. He put up his foot to push it; he tugged, and stopped for breath, and massed his weight again. But the lever refused to work, and the home signal remained at safety with that diabolical persistency that surprises us in soulless things. Joe stepped back and looked darkly at the mutinous signal. Should the home be allowed to show two perpendicular green lights — a clear track — when the express was stalled two hundred yards the other side on the same rails? For life's sake, no!

Then the superintendent's order inundated his mind. He had clean forgotten it — "No. 114 had

fifty-five minutes time over No. 20. No. 114 was the freight! My God!"

"Ring — ring — ring — ring — ring!" the electric bell announced the approach of the train far up the grade, two miles away.

At that terrible sound Joe's face took on a ghastly pallor. Now, at last, he was thoroughly awake. Well he knew that freights never mind the distant semaphore. That is the warning for expresses. Its level threat would convey no presage of evil to the engineer of that maledicted freight. Nearer still stood the two perpendicular green lights of the "home" blinking, as if to say, "Go on! Safety! A free track!" and upon that "free track" stood the disabled express.

Joe assaulted the lever again: his muscles cracked; his veins became undulating mounds; sweat blinded his eyes. But the lever refused.

Now, madly, the signal-man tried to switch the oncoming freight upon the accommodation track, that diverged from the bridge. But he could not stir the rod. That open signal had locked the switch peremptorily. Then Joe breathed heavily, and stood for one awful second to marshal his tired thoughts. The ice had clogged the wire. That was it. Ice! A hammer! a bar! to pull out the pin and disconnect the lock, and then there might be time to throw the switch.

Only the station-mistress, peering between her geranium leaves to watch the blockade, noticed a wild figure bounding from the tower, down the plat-

form, hatless, with a red lantern swaying in one hand, with the other grasping a hammer and an old file. A few of the passengers saw the gleam of Joe's red light. And the rear brakeman who had been ordered back to flag the track, noticing the lantern disappearing in the sleet up the track, thought the order already fulfilled which had been given to him.

Joe floundered through the drifts. He stumbled, he shut his teeth, he fell upon his knees, the ice cut his hands; but now his face began to shine with the hero's smile.

What was that? The distant, stertorous puffing of the freight, plunging full-speed down grade, down the icy tracks.

"A mile away!" said Joe to himself. "Oh, for a minute more!"

Flailed by the storm, Joe cast himself at the home signal. There, above him, the finger of the dejected semaphore for the first time failed to point at his own home. His eyes glanced at it fiercely. Now he hated the semaphore, the traitor, and he attacked it like a tiger. Hammer and file! Blow upon blow! The pin holds! The end of the file slips! There is the rumble of the freight! And there is the freight itself! One more blow, and another. It gives! It yields! The pin drops to the drift, and the semaphore rises by its own weight sullenly to place. Now swiftly, God be praised! the two vertical white lights, that signify "Danger! Halt!" swing into position, and replace the green.

The headlight gilds the snow. But Joe in his exaltation had ceased to think of himself. He neither cared nor knew which was track No. 2. He stood like a spectre upon the sleepers, facing the monster, and swinging the red lantern furiously. Thus men stormed the Redan.

Now it was that the engineer saw the danger signal for the first time; and in the centre of that red circumference he caught the white reflection of a glorified face. For an instant the locomotive tried to halt; then there was a dull blow, and the frightful staccato whistle calling "Down brakes!" shattered the crystal flakes. Even air-brakes would not have availed for the ice and grade; and the train, barely checked of her momentum, dashed on to collision.

. . . . . .

When it was all over a procession of three men, each with a white lantern, plowed up the track. One of these was the engineer of the freight, who had, the Lord knew how, escaped with his life and limbs. The conductor of the express followed him, and a doctor who happened to be on the train came along quietly.

"He was struck near the home," said the engineer slowly. "I saw the two whites come up, an' him swingin' in the middle of the track."

They came to the home signal. The unconscious snow had already covered the tracks lightly, so that there was no blood visible. For a few moments they looked in vain. Then the engineer

glanced up at the semaphore. As if ashamed of itself, and mourning for its part in the catastrophe, the senseless thing stood apologetically with its dingy arm stretched at last to danger. Instinctively the engineer followed with the light of his lantern the direction of that persistent finger. It pointed to a snowdrift on the other side of the track. The engineer went over, flashing his light. The conductor followed. There, at the foot of the short embankment, partly covered by the drift, lay Joe. The three men surrounded him solemnly; the doctor knelt beside him in the snow.

"Help me lift him up," said the doctor, in a quiet voice. "He is not dead."

. . . . . .

Even as the morning sun began to tire of an evident lack of appreciation, and was about to hurry around to another window where the shade *was* up, Joe opened his eyes slowly. Across the foot of his bed was thrust a lance of light, that had stolen to his breast through a rift in the curtain. In that single ray Joe watched brigades of dust, rising, falling, never ceasing, ever-disappearing. How like little lives these atoms were! How like his own, himself! Struggling for or falling by chance into the light, and then propelled by an imperious current, against the will, into an abyss, never to be seen again. Occupied with this unwonted philosophy, Joe's mind began to clarify, and by detachments his memory began to come back. He tried to lift up his head. It swam so that he sank back with a groan.

Hurrying in at the sound came Mary, his wife.

"Well, Joe!" she said. With the thoughtlessness of a healthy woman she threw up the shade. It is a question whether the wife or the sun kissed the pale face first.

Joe winced at the glare, and then looked at his wife's worn features tenderly. He was surprised at her cheerfulness. He hardly dared to say what was on his lips. But he knew it must come.

"I'm sorry," he said, with effort; "I'm afraid I can't attend."

"You don't need to." So said Mary, not in the least understanding what he meant, but speaking in that peculiar tone which is supposed to make a patient think that he was never better in his life. "You have been quite sick, Joe, and the doctor says you'll be up in a month."

Joe regarded her helplessly. Then he began to be angry at her heartlessness.

"We haven't been to church regular, but I guess Reverend Peck will officiate all right if he is asked."

"Why, Joe, dear, what do you mean?" She bent over him anxiously.

"Is the grave dug, Mary?" demanded the sick man. His lips quivered with deep emotion.

"Why, Joe!" cried Mary. Consternation sat upon her face. Was he "wandering" again?

"When people die they have to be buried," urged Joe, with some indignation. "Where have you laid the little fellar? In the spare room?

I 'm afraid I could n't get down into the settin'-room to see him; I 'd like to see him — once — before " —

" Oh, Joe! Why, Joe! Dear Joe!" Mary, his wife, the mother of their only child, their dead baby, looked at him, and broke into high, hysteric laughter. An expression of horror knotted itself into Joe's scarred forehead. Had grief and watching turned *her* mind? But Mary kissed the knot away, and said: —

" That was four weeks ago, Joe; and he did n't. He got well!"

Joe stared at his wife. Then an expression of bewilderment, followed by another of exquisite happiness and content, crossed and conquered his bruised face, as through the open door there came the moist gurgle of an infant's voice chased by a shrill and happy laugh.

But Joe did not get well as rapidly as they expected. With only a fracture of the leg and concussion of the brain, the doctor argued obstinately that he ought to be out in a month. But Mary saw that he had a weight upon his mind. Even the baby's little warm fingers could not lift it.

At the foot of the stairs one day, a big whisper asked: —

" How is he?"

" It 's Fred Joyce," said the sick man, feeling very weak at the sound of the voice. " Let him come up."

The signal-man came up as softly as he could.

"I want to speak to him alone, Mary," said Joe, putting out his hand from under the coverlid feebly. "Sit down, Fred."

"Well, I'm glad to see yer looking so well," said his mate, cheerfully, not knowing what else to say.

Joe closed his eyes. He was evidently collecting his strength to say something very important. He opened his eyes; his courage failed; he sighed, and then he blurted out, in his hollow voice:—

"Honest, Fred. How many were killed? No one has darst tell me." Not daring to look, he turned his face away.

"Killed? Who killed?" answered Fred, with what Joe took to be the evasion thought proper for the sick.

"114," came the strained reply. Joe could hardly move his stiffened lips.

"Oh," said the signal-man, smiling, "you mean that night, 114 and 42?"

Joe's eyes gave a timid assent.

"Why, not a man of 'em. *They* was all right," said Fred. "I'll have to tell you," he added. "I was kinder worried about you that evening, you remember, and I started over before ten, thinking I'd relieve you. So, on the platform who should I meet but the depot mis'ess, comin' out with a shawl over her head, and kind o' wild. 'Mis' Paisley,' says I, 'what the —— is the matter?' 'Look for yourself,' says she, and she pointed up'ard to the tower. You could have knocked me

down with a feather when I found you wan't up there. I saw you 'd left No. 2 down and I tried to throw it back, and then I knew what was up. The hammer and bar was gone, and I guessed you was out there fixin' of it. So I kept my hand on it to give it the grand chuck, you bet, when you got the pin out. Then I heard the freight, and knew hell was comin'. You done that jest in time, Joe. If you had n't done it then, there 'd been as pretty a smash-up as we 've ever had on this section. God! I throwed No. 6, an' then gave 'em track No. 4. 114 she struck the switch jest as I mashed it over. That damn lever nigh knocked the life out 'n me. I don't want to see nothin' like it as long as I live. I 've got gray hair since, my wife says. And you saved the train, Joe."

"But if you had n't been there, Fred, I might have been up for manslaughter." Joe touched his mate's hand impulsively.

"That 's all rot," said Fred, with expressive modesty.

Joe's eyes were closed and his hands were locked tight, like the switches themselves. He lay silent for a long time. Fred started to go. The baby crowed in the next room.

"Say, Fred." Joe did not want his friend to see how deeply he feared to ask the crucial question. But it had to come. "Say, who 's got my place?"

Fred laughed aloud. "No one, me boy." He slapped his own knee boisterously. "Me and

Matt — Matt 's well, you know — we 're holding of it for you. You want to hurry up and get well now."

"But how about my bein' asleep?"

"I ain't heard nothin' about it," interrupted Fred quickly.

"But what" — Joe stopped because his breath suffocated him. "What 's the Company done to me?"

Fred looked at the hero, whom the newspapers had not yet grown tired of lauding for his courage and his self-sacrifice, and, as he looked, a tender smile crossed his face. Such is not often seen on men of his kind, but Fred Joyce wore it well. He took Joe's white hand, and, rising, said: —

"The Company? Don't you know? Why, they 've given you a raise."

THE VALUE OF A CIPHER.

I.

WHEN Mrs. De Puyster Kendall opened the door of Miss Flood's famous intelligence office, she recoiled with a suffocated gasp, and tottered as if she were about to faint.

The office occupied the whole of the second floor on the street, and, extending through to the area court, it grew dark and darker as it approached the rear. In the front and in the light a low railing shut off the servants and made a public office for Miss Flood and her assistants. Here the lady in search of "help" made her selection for her own weal. Outside of this fence rude benches were arranged as for a prayer-meeting; the nearest to the "top" were thronged with an expectant, whispering, gossiping, rude-looking lot of women of all ages and sizes and nations. Towards the dusky rear the mass thinned out, until at the farthest end a solitary woman could be seen sitting in a rocking-chair, trying by the dim light to read the advertising columns of the morning paper, and swallow a cup of coffee at the same time. If any one wishes an antidote for constitutional hilarity let him spend ten minutes in a city intelligence office.

There was an immediate rustle of interest among the hundred women waiting pugnaciously for a mistress. This general awakening seemed to stir the close atmosphere from its lowest depths.

Mrs. De Puyster Kendall leaned heavily upon her daughter's arm, and applied salts to her veil with protesting vigor. After a few undecided and unelastic steps, she dropped upon the wooden bench within the railing. Mrs. Kendall generally swept into a room with that unconscious air of possession characteristic of irreproachable ancestry. But who can sweep into an intelligence office?

"Do let us go, Alys dear." By reason of excessive salts tears had arisen to the lady's eyes, and her pathetic appeal seemed like the first cannon fired in distress.

Her daughter answered with a cough, a laugh, and a wry face: —

"Try to stand it, mother dear, for a few minutes. It is dreadful, but we must have a table-girl. You sit here, and I will engage her."

Alys Kendall was a tall girl, with one of the classic profiles so common among our best Americans. She carried herself with a proud reserve that was evidently habitual to her, and shielded her mother from the gaze of the crowd with a cold look that abashed every low-born eye it encountered. Such ladies were not often seen at Miss Flood's. They generally sent their housekeepers, their companions, or their poor relations to select new servants.

Miss Flood darted into her flock and brought forth a woman with pert, super-experienced eyes, quieted for the moment into a respectful repose.

"How long have you been in service?" asked Miss Kendall, regarding the woman critically as she would one of a lower order of beings.

"Three year, Miss." The servant's cheeks crimsoned at the young lady's invulnerable hauteur, and she meditated revenge, if she should be engaged.

"What is your name?" proceeded Miss Kendall all the more imperiously because she felt embarrassed by this unusual interview. Her manner was glacial enough.

The girl looked at her pertly, and replied by saying: —

"What 's yours?"

Mrs. De Puyster Kendall, who had been watching the scene, now raised her eyebrows so high that any one of her fashionable friends would have paled at the reproof.

It had never occurred to either of these two applicants for a table-girl that a servant could catechise a lady. Alys gave a little gasp of horror. But the woman, unconscious of her enormity, took a step towards Mrs. De Puyster Kendall.

"Where do you live, mum?" she asked distinctly, and with the evident approval of a dozen faces behind the low railing. "How much company do you have? How many are there in the family? Have you any children? Can I have every evening out and all day Sunday? Do you promise never to

come into the kitchen? Do you keep a laundress? What do you pay?"

"Pay?" With a look Mrs. Kendall stopped the girl's catalogue of demands. Her steady voice was in fine contrast to the apologetic manner of other ladies present. "Pay? I pay nothing to such as you." The woman stared, and blushed, and courtesied, and turned, and shrunk behind the railing. Mrs. Kendall seemed to bring a breath of rare independence into that abased air. The impertinence of the office fell to zero.

"You can go inside, madam," said Miss Flood with the caressing voice which she reserved for difficult patrons, "and see if there is any one you take a fancy to." There was a bustle of new respect in the room. Before she knew it, Miss Kendall found herself in the stuffy crowd that ought to have been anxious, but was hectic with confident vivacity.

Alys gave one despairing, sweeping look and came back into the vestibule. She was motioning her mother to come away when she felt a slight touch upon her dress.

"Do you want a gurrul, Miss?" The face beside Miss Kendall was healthy and red and honest, a quick contrast to the hard, calculating, pale masks in the stifling room. Evidently the girl had come out for a breath of fresh air.

"Are you respectful? Can you wait on the table? Are you willing to work?" These cardinal questions leaped from Alys Kendall's lips. She had already become experienced.

"Oh yes, Miss," said the girl with an open smile. "I came over from the ould counthree to wurruk. Me name's Maggie Sheehan," with a courtesy. "I 've been only a wake out of quarterteen."

"She has just landed. She means quarantine," explained Miss Flood. "She is different from the rest, and untrained. I don't think she would suit you."

"Ye can thry me, Miss," said Maggie timidly.

"We live in the suburbs,"—began Alys, unconsciously catching the explanatory air of the place.

"The subbubs is good enough for the loikes of me," interrupted Maggie eagerly. She had waited a week for a place, and her heart sank within her at the prospect of another disappointment. She had no friends, and the other girls, one after another, as they drifted in and out, had made sport of her isolation.

"Very well," said Alys Kendall, checking the girl coldly, as she gave her card to Miss Flood, "you may send her this afternoon. And you, Maggie," she added, in a tone that was calculated to impress her new serving-girl with a due sense of the social gulf between them, "come promptly on time. You must take the 2.35 train. You will be met at the station. Here is a ticket."

Thus it happened, as it does to so many families, that an unknown quantity was thrust by some power more resistless than blind chance, upon the history of their lives. Thus it happened that Maggie Sheehan, a simple Irish girl, but a week in this

inexplicable country, found herself engaged to serve in the exclusive household of Mrs. De Puyster Kendall.

Mrs. De Puyster Kendall was a widow. A year ago she awoke in the morning and called her husband and stretched out her hand and touched him. He was cold. When her cries brought the family, they tried to explain to her that he was dead.

Hardwick Johnston, his lifelong friend and legal adviser, did the best he could for the widow. The problem of conducting expensive tastes, an elegant house, social exigencies, and an engagement on three thousand dollars a year — all that could be squeezed out of Mr. Kendall's fine leather business — was enough to stimulate the wits of the most patient lawyer and the nerves of the most aristocratic client.

"It will be easy to give up the stable, my dear Mrs. Kendall," said Hardwick Johnston soothingly. "The electrics are to be run on the boulevard; these will take you into town; besides, the station is only two minutes' walk from the house, you know."

The lady paled. "I shall soon learn to retrench," she said grimly.

When the coachman was dismissed, the laundress gave warning in order not to be forestalled, and the table-girl followed suit. The cook, who had a beau in the neighborhood, remained faithful to her mistress. Then followed a distressing interregnum. The family was now reduced to the necessity of

finding what is called a "second girl," a being hitherto unknown to their social experience. There had been a dozen changes in the last year. Only the depths of despair and a willing face accounted for the presence of this ignorant emigrant, Maggie Sheehan, in the De Puyster Kendall mansion.

"I will train her myself, mamma dear. Don't you worry," said Alys one evening after dinner. "A little gravy on your shoulder is better than no girl at all."

"I, for one, shall take my meals at the club until the dunce is broken in. Look at this shirt. I've stood that girl as long as I can." Bruce Durgin pointed at a few spatters that clustered like dark rays around his pearl stud.

"I compassionate the club," said a sweet voice cuttingly.

"Alys!" reproved her mother. Then, turning to the young man with a conciliatory smile: "I am sorry, Bruce, for the girl's carelessness. I will see that it doesn't happen again."

"Happen again!" repeated the young man sneeringly. "It has happened every night for a week. Why, the girl 's an Irish idiot. She 's a blockhead with a skull as thick as a barn door. You can't teach her anything." Bruce Durgin struck a match emphatically and, putting a cigarette between scowling teeth, lit it with boyish petulance. It was one of those houses where the dining-room is separated from the library by folding doors that rarely fold, and that are concealed by a heavy plush portière.

From the library one could not tell, on account of the drapery, whether the doors had met or not.

Alys Kendall was guilty of only one act of questionable breeding. It might be called a successive, a progressive act. She quarreled with her cousin Bruce Durgin whenever they were in the same room together, and had done so from the first week, when at her mother's invitation he had become a member of the family.

"I have talked to Mr. Durgin," Hardwick Johnston had said with appropriate gravity. "He seems to be a very reliable young man, and he has a fine position. My dear Mrs. Kendall, you must have a man in the house, and Mr. Durgin would feel more independent if he paid for his board. Besides, Mrs. Kendall," the lawyer lowered his voice, "even a little like this will help you at your table. Remember, it is not as it used to be. It is imperative that you have a man in the house."

Bruce Durgin was Mr. Kendall's own cousin, and considered by those who understood such things a remarkably promising business man. Towards casual acquaintances his manners were urbane; towards ladies in general, exquisite; but towards Mrs. Kendall they were already degenerating, towards Alys they had become extremely rude. The ladies had watched this decadence in Bruce Durgin with helpless humiliation. They were too proud to complain, and finally accepted this dark side of their cousin's nature as one accepts New England weather. For Durgin was the kind of a man whose

cowardly selfishness eventually leads to bitter words, even to insults in the seclusion of the home, and to success and admiration in the business world. He was tall, finely formed, good-looking in the distance; strong, coarse-featured, seen close to. He made a splendid appearance, and on the stalwartness of his figure had been elected lieutenant in the Cadets.

If Mrs. Kendall had ever fondly hoped that the two young people might take a fancy to each other, she had long since abandoned the impracticable idea. Upon the first day he came to them Alys had detected him in an unimportant lie. She was a girl of adamantine honor, and she had found it impossible to excuse or palliate the circumstance. His military figure went for nothing with her against his mental unmanliness. From that hour she was distrustful, haughty, and reserved towards him, and he, on his part, annoyed her with covert innuendoes and often with open rudeness. A day rarely passed but that a sharp word or a bitter look hurtled from one to the other.

"If you must talk like that about the girl," said Alys icily, "you ought at least to wait until the dining-room doors are shut or she is out of the room."

The clatter of dishes betrayed the fact that Maggie was in the dining-room, and had necessarily heard every word.

"She can stand it. It will do her good," replied Durgin, and he went up to his room whistling.

Tears of impotent rage dropped into the dishes

that Maggie Sheehan was carrying to the butler's pantry. When she came back to remove the table-cloth as best she knew how, she heard a familiar voice in the next room inveighing passionately. She crept to the portière. With lowering forehead and flashing eyes Alys Kendall was pacing the library. The beautiful and tranquil girl was transformed by her rage.

"That man makes me perfectly wild, mother!"

"Hush, dear, the new maid will hear you."

"I don't care! What if she does? What harm can that do?" she exclaimed, with natural inconsistency. "Bruce stirs up all the evil there is in me. I tell you, mamma" — The girl stopped before a heavy mahogany table and picked up an odd little silver letter-opener that lay there. "Sometimes I feel as if I could stick something into him. I hate him!"

"Why Alys, dear, you shock me!" Mrs. Kendall arose and regarded her daughter severely.

"You need n't look at me so, mamma. I can't help it! I can't live in the same house with him! It makes me wicked. Do send him away, mamma!"

"But, my dear, what would Teunis think to hear you talk so?"

At the mention of her lover's name Alys melted. She kissed her mother's high forehead and asked her forgiveness, and fondled her with a warmth which the worldly lady did not often encourage. Alys was not a demonstrative girl. She had been too highly bred by a lady who regarded concession

to one's feelings as a social sin. But a new and sweet love was softening the young woman's nature, and ancestral conventionalism fled before it.

This was partly due perhaps to the fact that Teunis Aylmer's family could not number among its fossil remains the first pterodactyl that hopped into the ark, or even a "signer," or a revolutionary general, or the first governor of a State. It had never occurred to the Reverend Prof. Aylmer to spend his vacations hunting for a pedigree at the rooms of the Genealogical Society. To derive a standing from the interpretation of the Old Testament was enough for him. It was a blow to his family of missionary reputation that his son Teunis (named in honor of a brother who converted sixty Mohammedans in one day in the aforesaid city) should prefer business to Hebrew; nor was the blow softened when Teunis was finally promoted, so keen his monetary instinct, to the head of the bond department in the great national bank which he served. In spite of all his family traditions, Teunis Aylmer was becoming rich.

But it was a greater blow to Mrs. De Puyster Kendall that a daughter of hers should pass by the bluest blood in the city for the doubtful fluid that ran in the veins of a professor's son. This was softened by the indisputable fact that Aylmer looked aristocratic, even if he were not so; by the further fact that already he had a fine income; and by the final fact that Alys loved him.

Three months ago the happy young people had

obtained the blessing of this stately mother, and had ever since been living in that delicate world of dreams and hopes which life knows but once. As for Bruce Durgin, it was understood that he was to leave the Kendall household as soon as the young people were married. But in the meanwhile Bruce twitted his cousin on her heart's choice, and affected to despise the son of the professor.

In fact, a cordial dislike existed between the two men. Alys Kendall unconsciously fanned the feeling, and was the less anxious about it because she did so. Whenever the lover came to dinner, the cousin dined at the club, and Aylmer was careful to leave before Durgin's last car was due.

Alys had hardly bestowed this unusual caress upon her mother, who, though outwardly surprised, was heartily gratified thereby, when light steps were heard hurrying to the front door. Alys turned her lithe figure and smiled divinely. At the same instant, before the bell was touched, a heavy tread resounded from the upper floor. Bruce was evidently coming downstairs. The two men might meet in the hall, and what disagreeable contretemps would happen?

Disregarding the strict rule of the house, the young lady ran to the front door and opened it. The fear of a scene had flushed, and the sight of her lover had glorified her delicate pale face. It was raining outside, and Teunis Aylmer swept in with the raw wind, and the lights flickered.

He uttered some disturbed exclamation at the

appearance of his betrothed, and caught her hands. The girl stood between him and the stairway, as if to shield him. Her white crêpe tea-gown, trimmed with delicate lace, wavered before his eyes. Her outline took a vaporous look, as if she might melt away from him at any time.

"Take off your rubbers. Be quick. I want to talk to you."

Aylmer looked at her in amazement, and obeyed. She put his umbrella in the rack, and helped him to hang up his hat, and stood over him as he sat on the hall sofa taking off his overshoes.

There was a step on the stairs, and an audible sneer. The young man flushed.

"I won't run away from him!" he said stoutly.

"Please me," whispered Alys. "Come, dear."

Bruce Durgin came down to an empty hall. A smile of malicious triumph illumined his strong face. He liked to feel that the two lovers feared and evaded him. He looked about for something to vent his spleen upon. In his haste Teunis had left his rubbers in front of the sofa. They were out of place and in the way. Durgin put on his overcoat and then did what one might imagine a naughty boy of six as doing, — he walked back and gave the rubbers a resounding kick and then went noisily out of the house.

"He 's a low-lived boor," said Teunis Aylmer, starting for the hall in a rage. "He deserves a sound thrashing, and I 'll give it to him some day!"

"Of course he is," assented Alys. "He deserves

anything. Only do stand it! It won't last long, — just to please me!"

It would have taken a stronger young man than he was to resist such an appeal.

With a laugh full of forced merriment the two began to talk on those unspeakable topics that lovers dream about and that married people omit and regret.

Mrs. De Puyster Kendall had discreetly retired to the parlor opposite. The hum of the ardent voices could be heard indistinctly from the library. In a lull Alys took up the silver letter opener from the mahogany table to play with it. It was a very odd ornament, about six inches long. A little over half of it consisted of a narrow, dull double blade with a sharp point. The metal was silver, well alloyed after the German method, and the blade was fairly inflexible. The handle was the odd part of it. It had a rosette attached to one of its flat sides. This rosette could be turned on its pivot. It was made up of delicate wire filagree work such as was popular in Germany over one hundred years ago and has been revived lately in iron work. Partly under the rosette this inscription had been cut: "M. L. S., 1784." The instrument was originally a Swiss hair dagger, and one of the rarest of the kind. Mrs. Kendall had purchased it in Nuremberg. It was one of the odd results of her last trip and was generally noticed by callers. Alys Kendall had been in the habit of playing with it whenever she sat near the table. Every one has some favorite

bauble which he values. This was Miss Kendall's. She was turning the rosette in her delicate fingers when she thought she saw the portière rustle.

"It is our new waitress," she explained with a happy smile. She called out, "Maggie, shut the folding doors."

"They air shut, Miss," came back a strong brogue.

"Why, Maggie, how can you say so? They are wide open. Shut them immediately."

"Shure I thought they was shut. I did, I did!" Then the doors flew together with a resounding bang.

"She seems to me to be a poor liar," said Teunis critically.

"I don't think she means to lie," explained Alys charitably, "but she sometimes fails to understand the nature of a fact."

"I should think that a serious state of things."

"Oh, no," replied Alys lightly. "It 's a very common thing."

The days passed into a week. The new table-girl was now regarded as a promising possibility, and accepted, in spite of her many faults, as a family dependent. Even the cook, who had been with the Kendalls eight years, received but cold respect to her face, and cautious enthusiasm within the inner circle. Maggie had many years to serve before she could hope to attain such a position.

Alys Kendall taught the girl with a good-humored, haughty superiority unavoidable to her tem-

perament, and that could not help occasionally gall the object of her instruction. Maggie was in terror of the arch of Miss Alys's thin eyebrows. She had rather hear a hundred Irish oaths than the still, clear voice that cut like a stiletto. She herself was a natural, noisy girl, and to walk in felt slippers, shut the doors softly, speak in an aspirated voice, was almost more than she could bear. When Miss Kendall said "Maggie!" the girl's crude mind groped for the reason of her own indignation. That fine reproof, that educated accent of irony, stung her like a wasp; but she could not analyze the venom. Yet she liked Miss Alys on the whole. She did not find her mistress rude; she had been accustomed to rough treatment, and she understood it better than the cruelties of the refined.

Then Maggie had a trait which may be called the common denominator of the serving classes. Veracity is a fine art, and she made coarse attempts to command it. These sometimes succeeded, and sometimes failed. In either case she was equally puzzled, and in both, if we may say so, equally honest.

"Father Shannon ought to teach these people better," Mrs. Kendall explained with a superior smile, looking like one of Gainsborough's portraits.

"It can't be his fault," replied Alys, "for you know, mamma, that Florence Higginbotham is a Roman Catholic, and she says that her church has nothing to do with it."

At this moment Maggie came in from the but-

ler's pantry, bringing a delicate platter of cold meat. She might have heard, or she might not. The ladies, like so many others, were very careless about talking before their servants. They had discussed the young lady's engagement before their new maid, as if she had been a deaf-mute. They had exchanged gossip at the table, all the more scathing because it was high-bred. Alys had said bitter things of Bruce in Maggie's presence. The girl was well aware of the almost malign dislike between these two cousins. She was a servant, and why consider her?

Suddenly Alys discovered that she was drinking her tea out of a cup that was not her own. Rather peremptorily, she asked where her favorite cup was. Maggie answered that she did not know. She had a blank look of surprise.

Miss Kendall ordered the girl to go and find it, and bring it to her immediately.

Maggie left the room, and after a moment came back with an honest, troubled expression, and said: —

"Shure it 's broke, mum."

"How could you be so careless, Maggie?"

"I did n't broke it, miss," answered the girl with filling eyes.

"Who did, then?"

"It broke itself."

The ladies smiled at each other sarcastically. Maggie watched the expression on her mistress's face with a kind of helpless rage.

"It lept out of me hands," she pleaded.

"Where will you go to if you tell such stories?" Alys spoke with unusual warmth. It was an engagement cup, and the circumstance was therefore more than a trifle to her.

"I tells the thruth; I tells the thruth," insisted the girl, with an air of strong conviction. "The cup lept out of me hands. It broke itself. I tells the thruth."

"I believe she thinks she does," observed the young lady, when the maid had gone sobbing from the room. "It is a curious phenomenon. It is a species of intellectual vagueness. I believe Maggie has a real objection to lying."

Miss Kendall called the girl back: "Maggie, when I went to town yesterday afternoon" —

"Sure, Miss," interrupted the new table-girl, "ye's did n't go out yesterday afternoon. It was me afternoon; I never got out until half-past three meself, and there ye was sittin' in the parlor."

"I took the three o'clock train," said Alys, laughing. "There, mother, what did I tell you?"

The curtains were tightly drawn in the library. Mrs. De Puyster Kendall had spent a lonely evening by herself in the parlor opposite, and had softly gone upstairs an hour before. Why should she sit up until twelve o'clock chaperoning a daughter about to be married within so short a time? Besides, Alys was *her* daughter. No girl in the land, she fondly thought, had such a rigid sense of the pro-

prieties. Until Teunis Aylmer came, Mrs. Kendall used to wonder with uneasy satisfaction whether her only child had a heart or not. Could that proud, calm profile hide a passion? Mrs. Kendall had never seen the evidences of such a contingency. Was it conceivable that great love or hate could burst the welded chains of decorum and reveal another daughter? No one but Bruce had ever thought of such a preposterous possibility. He alone had made a discovery, and lately he had begun slowly to torture this second, volcanic Alys. This saturnine sport was sometimes better fun than playing poker at the club, a game at which he inevitably won. The young lady, though conscious of extreme irritability, nevertheless remained cold under the most provoking attacks. She controlled herself for her lover's sake. Even Mrs. Kendall was partially ignorant of these inimical skirmishes, in such good form were they now planned and carried out.

But Maggie had more than once, at breakfast, caught her young lady's eyes resting like hot coals upon her cousin. These eyes had haunted the Irish girl. She did not like Mr. Bruce any too well herself. He was overbearing and unendurable, and she could only take it out in slamming.

What ailed Alys Kendall to-night? She was tired and nervous. She was not like other girls, and when her head dropped on Aylmer's shoulder he trembled at the rare concession.

"Why should we wait?" he stammered raptu-

rously. "Don't let us wait any longer. Be my wife. Tell me when!"

Alys looked up to him happily. The recent conflict with her cousin had completely exhausted her. She felt as if she had fought a battle and lost it. Every nerve seemed astray from its centre. She felt to-night, perhaps, the first joy of being folded in the arms of one who hungered to protect and shield her, as only a husband could.

"The sooner the better," she said with a long sigh. "I don't see how I can stand it much longer. Every day Bruce has a new and worse aggravation. Mamma does n't understand him or me. It almost kills me to control myself. I don't know what I should do if I did n't, though."

"When I have the right" — the young man began with clenched lips.

"He will be gone then," Alys smiled.

"Then do let us make haste! It is best for both of us," he said pleadingly. "Make it a month? No? Then two months from now, sweetheart. Make it the fifteenth. That comes on Saturday."

"Oh, you have been planning it all out. How did you dare?" she reproved him with her finger, laughing.

"I admit the charge," Teunis answered seriously. "I have a strange feeling that the sooner we are married, the better it will be."

The young girl's fine face looked questioningly out of the library into the hall. Teunis Aylmer

waited for her answer. Her cousin's silver-handled cane met her eyes. She closed them and nodded slowly. With a rapturous exclamation her lover caught her and kissed her.

"You will?" he said, rising to his fullest height. "You will?" Her lips hesitated and then formed and uttered the word "yes." Then as if realizing for the first time that she had committed her life to the tenderness and love of the man before her, she pushed him away, that he might not caress her again.

"Go," she said. "Be satisfied. I want to be alone. Go now, please." Like a soldier he obeyed, and went into the hall, and put on his overcoat, and took his hat and his gloves in his hand.

Was there a slight rustle behind the portière of the dining-room? If so, neither of them noticed it.

Aylmer came back and looked at Alys appealingly.

"No," she whispered. "You may kiss my hand. That is all to-night." As he bent, a key was pushed into the lock and the front door opened with a quick click.

"Ah, hah!" sneered Bruce Durgin's cynical voice. "Billing and cooing again!"

Teunis Aylmer flashed around and met the sarcastic eyes of the other.

"And if I am, Mr. Durgin, no one has a better right, as this lady is to be my wife in a few weeks'

time." His chin trembled in his great indignation, and his left hand tore its own glove.

Durgin was the taller of the two, and he looked down upon his antagonist contemptuously.

"Oh — so?" he said with slow impudence. "I congratulate you. You'll make a pretty pair. Look out for yourself; when she" —

He had not finished, when Aylmer made a sudden bound towards him as if to strike. Then, as suddenly, he controlled himself and stopped. Bruce Durgin took a step backward, throwing up his arms to ward off the assault. When none came, and when he saw his antagonist stop, he smiled the kind of a smile that a man has been shot for, before now. A low rattle of rage came from Aylmer's lips. The blood rushed to his head and blinded him. Alternately his nerves urged him to strike, and his manhood to stand.

All this time Alys had stood motionless. But at her lover's threatening motion she threw herself between them, and before either knew his own position, clasped Aylmer's clenched hand in one of her own, and with the other reached to the front door.

"Go," she cried in a low and terrible tone. The door was on the latch. She flung it open. "For God's sake, Teunis, go." The young man started to open his lips.

"Don't speak, if you love me, but go."

Teunis Aylmer backed out. It was as if a crushing force pushed him. Before he knew it,

the door closed in his face. He tried it. It was locked. For a moment he stood on the step and glared at it helplessly. He seemed to recall a strange expression on her face. Then he turned slowly to the street. "After all," he thought, "it saves a row before a lady, and she's a match for him." With clearing furrows in his forehead, he reached the sidewalk. He looked once more at the house. It was dark. And then he felt a touch upon his arm.

With an impertinent look of triumph on his coarsened face, Bruce now began to hang up his hat. "Your young man seemed to be mighty glad to go," he said tauntingly, smoothing his collar, as if it had been crumpled by a blow.

Alys regarded him with a look of such withering scorn that he stopped.

"Come into the library," she said in an imperious tone. "I must speak to you, and I don't care to wake mamma."

She preceded him into the room. In amazement at her restraint he followed her. When he closed the door behind him, and looked at her, his heart fell. He had never seen a lady so angry before. Her very calmness made her more terrible to him, and he knew that he had gone too far. If he had not known this, a shudder slowly chilling his flesh would have told him so.

There was only one gas jet burning in the library, and that was not bright. The shadows that the two cast were uncertain and gloomy. It was mid-

night, and the stillness of the hour was only broken by regular inhalations. These sounded like the distant, muffled puffings of a locomotive. But in their excited condition neither of the two noticed this almost imperceptible break in the stillness.

For an instant the man and woman confronted each other. The one bit his lips nervously; the other looked as if she were praying for strength. The curtains between the library and dining-room swayed noiselessly as if in a draught.

"I wish," began Alys in a strange, hoarse voice, "I wish you to promise never to speak to Mr. Aylmer again."

This was not said imperiously, but in a tone of concentrated pleading. The girl, not trusting herself to speak further, stopped and waited. Her back was to the single light. In the gloom one could not have said whether her hands were clenched or not. She stood motionless. Only her head moved rhythmically to the beating of her arteries. If she had commanded him, he would have assented. But her pleading awoke the devil in him. The sense of his physical superiority and of his power for insult mastered his momentary apprehension and the better feeling that accompanied it. If she had blazed at him, the history of that family would have been different. Her self-control, as it very seldom happens, missed its object.

"Supposing I don't promise, what then?" he asked tantalizingly. Then he yawned. He had

now made up his mind to drive her to the furthest limit in this interview, and let her alone ever after. He watched her narrowly. Perhaps he had an idea that in her last desperation she would spring upon him. He knew Alys Kendall better than her mother did, — perhaps better than her lover did, — or thought so.

"You will promise me before you leave this room, Bruce Durgin," she said, raising her voice until it had a low, shrill ring.

The man laughed lightly and shook his head.

"If you do not promise, either you leave this house or I do. I shall stand no more." The blood was slowly mounting to her white forehead. It inundated the delicate blue veins.

Bruce Durgin made a contemptuous sound, and, shifting his weight to his right foot, thrust his hands into his pockets, and regarded her with a bored look. This was more than the girl could bear.

"You are unmanly and a brute!" she hurled at him.

"Go on," he said, with a low, mocking bow.

"You 're a coward to do in the house here what you would n't dare to do at the club. They would turn you out if they knew you as well as I do." She was fast losing her admirable control, and before she knew it, it was gone. This moment was the outcome of months of self-restraint.

"I shall do what I please," replied Bruce Durgin icily.

"I 've borne all I can. I have come to the end. You must leave this house, and I will tell my mother so." She walked about the room in great agitation.

For answer the young man turned his back upon her, and taking a match from the mantelpiece, began nonchalantly to light his everlasting cigarette.

The portière yawned. Neither of them saw the face of the Irish girl as it looked in. Maggie saw her mistress approaching Bruce Durgin on tip-toe. As his back was turned, he did not notice either of the women. Something in the awful expression of Alys's determined and angry face, the hour, the gloom, the opportunity — these filled Maggie's mind with terror. She dared not look longer, and slid across the carpeted room to the back hall, up the back stairs, and flung herself upon her bed, alone in her own room. There she lay dressed, revolving in her unimaginative, dull way the scene which she had witnessed. How long she lay awake she did not know; but she had the healthy physique of an Irish peasant, and before she was aware it was morning. When the cook called her to get up she uttered a short cry. With a reluctance, incomprehensible to herself, the girl arose, washed her face and smoothed her hair and dress, and, with black memories in her heart and black rings around her eyes, descended to her morning duties.

Alys Kendall was always a light sleeper, and it

had been impossible for her to close her eyes after the terrible scene of the night before. It was just seven o'clock when she heard Maggie shaking the back stairs with her heavy tread which she vainly endeavored to make light. Oppressed by senses so restless and exalted that they had rehearsed every high-wrought gesture, every harsh word and sarcastic answer, she hastily arose and, putting on a wrapper of crimson silk and plush, lifted the curtains and looked out.

The morning was brilliant with sun and the colors of the decadent autumn. The electric cars, filled with clerks going to their early desks and counters, whirred and rang past the house towards the city. Hearing a stir in the next room, she turned and listened. It was her mother moving in bed. Now, rising like a clear vision through the dark fog that the quarrel precipitated upon her imagination, there came to her the memory of the promise she had made her lover. Blushing softly, she glided into her mother's room.

"Why are you up so early, Alys?" asked the elder lady. "Did n't Teunis leave a little late last night? I was too sleepy to sit up. What time did you go to your room?"

Alys Kendall disregarded these questions. She sat down on the edge of the bed, and with a new shyness took one of her mother's hands.

"I have told him the fifteenth of next month," said Alys demurely. "You are not angry with me, mamma, for making it so soon? You will always

have me, you know." She bent over to kiss her mother coaxingly. As she did so, they were both startled by a shriek that came from the lower part of the house. It was with little difficulty that they recognized the voice of their new table-girl.

"Murther! Murther! *Murther!*"

Terrified feet rushed into the uncarpeted hall. The front door was flung open with a powerful hand. There, upon the stone steps of the house the Irish girl stood, waving her arms in frenzy, and shrieking "Murther! Murther!" until the voice rang far down the boulevard, until a mass of wandering and startled humanity swayed before the house, until a blue-coated policeman with great presence of mind shook her violently by the arm, and roughly bade her in a familiar tongue to stop. Then the servant, spent beyond endurance, fell lifeless into the officer's arms.

"What does this disturbance mean?" Miss Kendall flamed before the policeman and the people. She stood tall and commanding in her crimson wrapper. She surveyed her lifeless maid with freezing disapproval. "She will go to-day," she said to herself. Then aloud, haughtily: "Bring her in, if you can, and shut the door. Such a scene is scandalous."

"The girl is out of her head, Miss," said the man humbly. "Does she drink, mum?" he added.

"No," Miss Kendall shook her head.

The policeman lifted the heavy woman with professional skill, and carried her in and laid her in

the hall. The cook shut the door. The people outside stared at the house a while longer, and began slowly to disperse.

The old lady's voice, firm in the afternoon, but quavering in the morning, called from upstairs: "Alys! Bruce! Maggie! What is the matter? Somebody come and tell me."

The cook, who had been in the family eight years, bent over the new girl and felt of her heart. She looked up and nodded familiarly at the policeman.

"She got a letter from home last night. Poor girl! she 's that homesick."

"Rats!" said the policeman, with critical irreverence. "This ain't no letter. She 's comin' to now."

Miss Kendall had been standing over the group, looking from one to the other coldly and inquiringly. But now, as Maggie revived, her womanly sympathy was aroused. She started for the library door, and for some unaccountable reason stopped and turned back.

"Go into the library," she said to the cook, "and on the table you will find my salts."

Alys was very pale, and now she trembled so that even the policeman noticed the fact. He was about to go.

"You had better set down, Miss," he said kindly. "Ye ain't used to sech things, as I am. It 's only a fit. She 's all right, she is."

But a shrill voice from the library arrested her.

"Oh, Mother of Nations! There 's a man a-lyin' on the floor!"

Alys sank upon the hall sofa; but the policeman bounded into the library. He bent over a prostrate figure, flung up the window shades, and bent again.

"It 's Mr. Bruce!" said the cook in a high key.

When Alys Kendall heard that name she arose and walked slowly into the library. There, under the mantelpiece, in a heap, with his head against the grate, lay her cousin, Bruce Durgin. The cook's eyes played between the body and her mistress. Alys stooped over him.

"Has he been — murdered?" she asked in a voice husky with fright. The man shook his head doubtfully. "I don't see no blood," he answered. He now dropped to his knees and examined the corpse carefully. He was careful not to disturb its position. Then he looked up with a grave expression.

"Who is he? He 's been knifed in the back of the neck."

As he gave this verdict, he looked at the young lady from sheer curiosity. But she was staring at the corpse of her cousin. What horror, what regret did those stony eyes express or veil?

"Who saw him last?" asked the policeman naturally.

Just as Miss Kendall was about to answer, "Why, I did," an excited voice was heard from the hallway.

"*She* did!"

They had forgotten about Maggie Sheehan. There in the doorway the girl stood, white, shaking in every limb, crossing herself hysterically with one hand, while the other pointed tremblingly at her young mistress. "She did," repeated Maggie Sheehan hoarsely. "I saw her meself."

II.

Miss Kendall sat in the farthest end of the sofa in the corner of the parlor most removed from the front windows. Every time an electric car passed by it slowed up, while the conductor or motorman pointed out to gaping passengers the now notorious house. The young lady shrank from this morbid curiosity as she would have done from a mob flinging stones. Whenever she heard a step halt before the house, and after a pregnant pause pass on, she felt as if she had been wounded by blows, so acute was the shock to her pride.

The mansion of Mrs. De Puyster Kendall was in the hands of the law. The preliminary examination of the corpse and of the premises had lasted twelve terrible hours. The young lady had testified; Maggie Sheehan had testified; Teunis Aylmer had testified; the cook had testified, and Mrs. De Puyster Kendall had answered such questions as her strength permitted. As the murder of Bruce Durgin bade fair to lead to a memorable and piquant trial, the public already knew more about

it than the inmates of the Kendall household. These two ladies were too exhausted and excited to pay attention to the details of the legal proceedings. A murder had been committed under their roof and under the most distressing circumstances. The ladies had the naïveté to expect the police to discover the criminal. The notoriety of their situation was something unbearable. After proper investigation, and the conviction of the murderer, they contemplated moving to another part of the country. They discussed spending the winter in southern California.

But at present Alys Kendall hardly dared to go upstairs. Her mother, lost in nervous attacks, blamed in succession her lawyer, her daughter, her future son-in-law — herself — for this distressing publicity. Thus, hidden in a deep sofa, as far as possible from sound and sight, the young lady's thoughts ran a ghastly round in a dazed and mechanical way.

These two days had told heavily upon her. Her cheeks were sunken and of glassy pallor under her eyes, a sign of weeping or of dragging sorrow. Her face, usually of a beautiful pale coloring, and still holding its exquisite outline in profile, looked, from a front view, haggard and almost wrinkled. Her friend, Florence Higginbotham, a blonde society girl, sat beside her, undecided whether to talk religion or discuss Paderewski.

"Teunis ought to be here," said Miss Kendall restlessly.

Miss Higginbotham answered that it was all so awfully distressing. Alys might miss the Hospital Fair. How could she bear to forego that brilliant social event? Now, if Alys were only in the Church, what a comfort Father Shannon would be!

A soft knock interrupted the fair girl's sympathy. Miss Kendall knew who it was, and a shade of disappointment crossed her features as she said: —

"That 's the lawyer, Florence. You will have to go now."

Hardwick Johnston, the attorney, walked in and cautiously shut the door. He was a man of about fifty; of a thin face, that expressed more unflagging determination than refinement, but which was by no means coarse. He had kindly eyes which, even as they persuaded, inspired trust. He was unaffected, and had little pretense to fashion in his dress. His sandy beard that seemed unable to turn gray straggled to a point which hid his necktie. Mr. Johnston was one of the few lawyers who never studied the art of circumlocution. He was direct and honest. Alys Kendall was too ignorant of the importance of testimony to know from what wiles of the law he had saved her at the justice's examination. She had been protected from beginning to end. Her proud nature had chafed when he had whispered: —

"You had better not answer this question." "I advise you not to reply to that."

She gave such testimony as he permitted, and it had been so arranged that she had heard no other

except the desultory supplement to her own statements offered by her mother.

The ladies supposed that nothing more would be required of them regarding the case. What the other witnesses testified they did not know, and were too much stunned to care. They trusted the law.

The lawyer now sat down beside Alys Kendall. His face was exceedingly grave and troubled, so much so, that she looked at him and asked: —

"Has anything been discovered?"

The family lawyer shook his head deliberately.

"That is the reason I want to ask you a few questions," he said. "I am your best friend, Miss Kendall, and you must answer me as straightforwardly as you can." For the first time he did not look at her as he finished, but regarded the pattern of the velvet carpet at his feet.

"Mr. Johnston!" exclaimed Alys Kendall with indignant emphasis. "I certainly shall," she added with a ghost of her old hauteur.

The lawyer now looked her in the face with a pleased smile, and nodded encouragingly.

"Have n't I said enough before those — men? Must I?" — She stopped abruptly as she observed a solemn look invade his face.

"You must," he said. "I am sorry to say you must."

Miss Kendall straightened herself with great dignity. Then, seeing that he did not begin immediately, she uttered the anxiety of her heart.

"Where is Mr. Aylmer? Why does n't he come to me?"

The lawyer scanned her as if gauging her strength and said, with a curtness that would have been brutal had it not been for his compassionate tone:

"Mr. Alymer has been arrested."

"*Arrested?* Arrested for what? It 's an outrage! Let me go to him." She started up.

"Stay, Miss Alys! Do not let me distress you too much. There is no question in my mind but that he can prove a good alibi. Mr. Higginbotham was luckily walking past the house when Mr. Aylmer came out."

"George Higginbotham? Florence's brother?"

"Yes," proceeded the lawyer. "It is very fortunate for Mr. Alymer, for Mr. Higginbotham testified that he looked in when the door was open and he saw you and Mr. Durgin standing in the hall. Mr. Aylmer joined him, and they waited together for a car to town."

"Then he will be at liberty. What an outrage to arrest him! They might as well arrest me." The young lady sprang again to her feet. Mr. Johnston watched her solemnly, and put his hand gently on her arm.

"Sit down, Miss Kendall. I am afraid you do not see the importance of this testimony. There has had to be a warrant issued for the arrest of some one else, who is alleged to have committed this murder."

"Who is it? Why don't they arrest him at once? Whom do they suspect?"

"Miss Alys, the district attorney suspects you." The lawyer said this as naturally as if he were asking for a glass of water; yet his voice trembled in spite of himself.

"*Me?*" Alys Kendall raised her head royally, and then let it sink upon the back of the sofa, while an amused smile flitted over her pale face. "*I* murder my cousin? Why, how ridiculous!"

She leaned back and closed her eyes to collect her thoughts. Hardwick Johnston took the opportunity to inspect the young lady closely. If his mind had been open landscape, he would have been himself surprised to notice unaccountable vibrations in the rock of his conviction. He considered himself as positive of Alys Kendall's innocence as he would have been of his own daughter's. The instinct of a gentleman, not the nature of the evidence, taught him as much as this. Drawing a deep breath, as if she had thrown a load from her heart, she now opened her eyes, and the old amused smile gave them a sparkle. The family lawyer brightened up when he saw it. That uneasiness of heart, which could not be called suspicion, but was not identical with trust, slipped from him positively and permanently.

"On whose testimony am I to be arrested? Who is it?" Miss Kendall asked the question with a light face and a grave voice.

"Upon the testimony of Maggie Sheehan," he replied slowly.

"Maggie Sheehan?" Miss Kendall repeated

the name incredulously. "Our Maggie? Why, how absurd!"

It was too true, and the press, which would devote a column or so to the death of a distinguished horse, rang with this human opportunity. The psychological argument to the contrary carried little weight with the judicial mind, and much force with the average householder. That Alys Kendall, whose name was pronounced with horror or with compassion by thousands of thinking citizens, should be guilty of the crime of murder, seemed alike preposterous and inevitable. Who else could have killed Bruce Durgin? Miss Kendall was known to have had the last interview with him at midnight, and that, by her own admission, was of the stormiest kind. Who else could be charged with a sinister motive but the woman who had quarreled with him (under high provocation, it is true) ever since he had entered her mother's house?

Teunis Aylmer's fortunate alibi was sufficient to discharge him from custody; but this very circumstance only helped to wind closer meshes of circumstantial evidence around the unhappy girl; for, before her lover had understood the gravity of the case, he had testified that Miss Kendall had pushed him out to save a serious dispute between the two young men. And his friend George Higginbotham was forced to admit that the quick glance which he had cast through the open door showed Miss Kendall and Mr. Durgin facing each

other in an attitude that might have been called a threatening one.

The latent qualities that Bruce discovered in his cousin now sprang to the surface. When it was first gently intimated to this young lady what it meant to be arrested upon a criminal charge, and that she must leave her mother's home for the county jail, she drew herself up haughtily, and said: —

"Really, Mr. Johnston, this is almost too grave a situation for a joke."

"I would to God it were a joke!" replied the lawyer solemnly. "I am afraid you will have to spend this night and many more in prison."

"But Mr. Aylmer will bail me out," she said confidingly.

"You are arrested upon the only crime in the statute books for which there is no bail," said the lawyer slowly.

An inarticulate sound came from her throat. Then with biting contempt she spoke: —

"Is this the thing that men call *law?* How dare they? How *dare* they? The horror! The disgrace! The wickedness! The outrage! The outrage! Is this Russia?" She stopped for breath, blazing and panting. A coarse knock at the door interrupted her. An officer stepped into the room.

The girl looked from the officer to the lawyer, and then to the window, as if the mad thought of escape had taken possession of her. But suddenly she said with coldness and with great dignity: —

"I should like to go upstairs and pack my bag. I suppose I may? This will kill my mother."

. . . . . .

Like most intelligent people in such a situation she proved to be a good prisoner. She rendered a haughty obedience to every rule, and a contemptuous respect to the officers of the jail. She was treated with calm severity, as if she had already been condemned. In one particular only she offered a silent defiance to the custom of the place. She positively refused to accompany her fellow-prisoners in their daily walk in the prison yard. She firmly declined to put herself on an equality with low women and thieves. She said: —

"I am innocent and uncondemned. If this is law, it ought not to be, and I will not submit to it."

Having no exercise or fresh air, prison pallor and emaciation made alarming strides upon her.

In the daytime she was perfectly calm. The matron and watchman reported that they heard her night after night pacing her cell and moaning aloud. They could indistinctly catch the words: —

"This is horrible! It is horrible!"

Six weeks after her incarceration, a few days only before the public hearing, Hardwick Johnston entered the matron's room. Miss Kendall was awaiting him. He was shocked at the ghastly work which that short time had wrought upon her. Her eyes had that hopeless stare which is so well known to precede the loss of reason. Afraid to

make known his errand to her, and yet for that very reason plunging into it, Hardwick Johnston said: —

"I am sorry to have to tell you" —

"Where 's mother?" interrupted the client.

"She cannot come to-day. I am sorry. She is not very well."

The young lady looked at him steadily.

"Is she dead?"

"Oh, no" —

"She will be soon," replied the daughter stolidly. Her hot eyes looked as if they could never weep again. "Even the law must have a reason for this thing," she said, putting her hand to her head musingly. "I can't seem to get at it. What is it? There must be some excuse for keeping me here. What is it?"

"It is the testimony of Maggie Sheehan," replied the lawyer. "She says she saw you do it. I have n't told you this before. I did not dare to. The trial is close at hand, and you must know it."

"Maggie saw me do it?" repeated Alys, with a sarcastic smile. "That Irish girl saw me kill my cousin?"

The lawyer nodded mournfully.

"I say she did not," affirmed Alys Kendall quietly. "Now, will these men believe a lady or a peasant?"

The lawyer shook his head.

"Which of us will the judge believe?" repeated Alys imperiously, "the mistress or the servant?"

"They will believe the evidence," said the lawyer in some confusion.

"Evidence?" inquired the girl thoughtfully, "what is that?"

This was a poser for the lawyer; and, gently evading the question, he brought the interview to an abrupt end.

There was not an honester man in the State than the district attorney; if he were brusque and stern, it was the natural result of the suspicion developed in him by his calling. From a layman's point of view, he seemed to believe that he was elected, not to protect the people, but to convict them. From his own standpoint, it should be said, he looked upon conviction and protection as identical.

As he sat alone during the fifteen minutes preceding the trial, striving to marshal his faculties for the scene before him, his mind filled itself with the legal illustrations natural to his position. With the attorney's reverential respect for "precedents," he recalled certain distinguished cases. How many beautiful women — beautiful ladies, if you will — had committed murder, and had been condemned or acquitted according to the circumstances! He thought of Mrs. Wharton. He remembered Laura Fair, with whose acquittal he had never been in full legal sympathy. In Mrs. Maybrick's innocence he had no faith. The case of Eliza Manning of London occurred to him. What well-read law-

yer could forget it? True. Impossible to deny that the murderer was discovered after her execution; such instances would happen. It was an ill-advised expression of public opinion that would have mobbed the prosecuting officer. Some innocent people must, of course, be executed. That is the privilege of living in a civilized community. So reasoned the attorney gravely and conscientiously. This conclusion, startling perhaps, possibly even amusing to men of different callings, was the natural outcome of his education. He had been taught it in the class-room at the law school by his professor, and the catchword had become a conviction.

Then the marshal interrupted the judicial reveries.

"Sir," he said, "we 're ready for you."

The court-room was crowded to fainting. One would have thought that it was a musicale which the throng attended, and not a dance of death. They whispered and laughed and stared; and when the accused entered, supported by her lover and her lawyer, the front seats craned forward, and the back seats arose and greeted the beautiful young lady with the rapturous breath that is only reserved for a first-class sensation.

"Only witnesses allowed in those seats!" The loud cry of the court officer silenced the questioning buzz.

Every heart beat higher as the judge entered; the court respectfully arose; and the hearing was formally opened.

The gaze of the audience was divided. Reporters were busy at the same instant describing the accused and the accuser.

Alys Kendall sat behind the railing, — a prisoner; in front of her sat Maggie Sheehan, — a free woman.

Involuntarily Alys Kendall's memory retraced what seemed to her to be ages of time, and paused to contemplate the scene at the intelligence office. And now the emigrant who had been so haughtily engaged and so sarcastically trained held the fate of her mistress in her roughened hand. What vain imagination would have predicted that an obscure Irish maid could ever be the arbiter of Mrs. De Puyster Kendall's honor? Yet where is the aged woman whose natural right it was to support her daughter in this dreadful hour? Turning feebly in her bed; chattering to her physician and her nurse, delirious past control, — and sinking into a merciful dementia, the only possible avenue of relief to a shock and a despair like hers.

The court opened with the testimony of the medical examiner who, being duly sworn, averred that the wound causing the death of Bruce Durgin must have been inflicted by a very small, sharp-pointed instrument. The district attorney, among many others, asked the following questions: —

"In your opinion could this wound have been inflicted by some ordinary parlor ornament, a paper-cutter, for instance?"

"It could, sir."

"Or a letter-opener?"

"Yes, sir."

"Could a woman have done this deed with ease?"

"It is quite possible. It might have been done with a needle. The wound was made in the only spot in the human body where a slight prick can destroy life."

"Describe this spot."

"It is technically known as the restiform body in the medulla oblongata."

"Would death under such circumstances be immediate and painless?"

"It would."

"Has any instrument conforming to the wound been found on the premises?"

"I have seen none such."

In due order, Maggie Sheehan, being sworn, arose to testify.

Florence Higginbotham, sitting between her brother and Teunis Aylmer, flashed an encouraging smile at the prisoner. Alys Kendall stared at her friend without a smile, turned slowly, and fixed her tearless eyes upon her maid.

There was a significant stillness in the court-room. Every glance flew around the short course outlined by a fateful triangle, bounded by the district attorney, the witness, and the prisoner. Miss Kendall was dressed in a close-fitting, tailor-made, black broadcloth gown. This gave an admirable

outline of her graceful, lithe figure. Her black Astrakhan cloak was thrown carelessly over the back of her chair, and was only caught by a broad ribbon around her waist. Her hat was an exquisite piece of millinery work. This fashionable mourning headdress gave flippant reporters the opportunity to describe a square foot of black garden, planted with weeds, bachelor's buttons, and the frugal end of an ostrich feather. Nevertheless it made a fine setting for her abundant black hair, and for her pale face. As the people looked upon that face, it seemed to them monstrous that it could be a mask for guilt. Its pure outline, firm as a Greek intaglio, its broad forehead, its satin skin lightly touched by violet veins, its self-possessed poise, and its tone of pride, both softened of their natural hauteur by calamity; the sensitive chin, and lips seriously pressed together; her dark, unwavering, scornful eyes — these traits entered into a willing conspiracy to form a beautiful picture rarely to be seen anywhere, and never to be forgotten. The prosecuting officer had been a poor boy, and he had worked his way up to his present position. His heart hardened before her fashionable attire. Such a blind feeling against unassailable birth was followed by the French Revolution. He felt it a rare opportunity to vindicate the impartiality of the law. The audience, on the other hand, with a deep sigh of compassion, turned and looked at the maid.

Maggie Sheehan was also very pale, and gasped

for breath as she stood up. When she arrived in the witness stand she swayed, and only kept herself from falling by supporting herself with both hands. These hands were ungloved, coarse, strong, broad, stubbed at the fingers, with nails bitten to the quick. Upon her two thumbs hangnails ended in virulent rims of red. She had on a woolen dress that fitted her loosely around the waist and shoulders. A broad, brown plush hat with a big and impertinent feather completed her attire. Her face, naturally of a coarse, ruddy complexion, was refined by the pallor that so quickly overtakes peasants in the moment of shock. Her mouth was large and rounded by full, terra-cotta lips, disclosing irregular, white teeth. Her chin retreated to a solid, creamy neck. Her eyes were calf's eyes, only blue. These redeemed her face from imbecility. Under the girl's easy emotions they appeared limpid, appealing, surprised, injured, innocent, honest, or suspicious, evading, angry, or revengeful. They were set far apart. They were the eyes of an animal, whose whole intellect is concentrated in acquiring food and shelter. A physiognomist would have perceived in those beautiful eyes the quality of the girl's intelligence, limited by inheritance and untrained by opportunity. When any one addressed her, her glance wandered for a resting-place, until it lit upon some object, — the knob of the door, or the top of the window; but when she answered, she looked the speaker steadily in the face with a defiant boldness that in-

creased or decreased in proportion as the subject was light or important, and that argued an entire ignorance of her mental limitations, as well as a moral uneasiness, as if she did not know exactly how she stood in her priest's estimation or her own.

Miss Kendall's regular face, moulded and colored by generations of culture, and quickened by excitement, afforded a memorable contrast to that of her table-girl.

Thus the mistress and the maid challenged the faith of the court. Just as the attorney was about to ask his first formal question, Teunis Aylmer, by one of those impulses that are becoming rare in our conventional days, jumped up from his seat, crossed over to Miss Kendall's chair, and pressed her hand. This exhibition caused a decided sensation. Mr. Hardwick Johnston with quick tact said, offering his own chair: —

"Take my place beside Miss Kendall, Mr. Aylmer. Two are better than one at this crisis. I don't think the court will object. I will take the next seat."

The lady looked at her lawyer gratefully. It was a little thing, but the young man sat beside his betrothed until the trial was finished.

"What is your name?" demanded the district attorney of his own witness with an encouraging smile that, somehow, did not make his face look kinder. Yet in his soul he meant to be just. His judicial character was unimpeachable.

"Maggie Sheehan, sorr." The answer came in a broad brogue, which it is impossible fully to reproduce.

"Where were you born?"

"In Killarney, by the lake, sorr; in Kerry, in Oirland, sorr."

"How old are you?"

"Shure I don't know. They niver tould me."

"Could n't you guess?"

"Shure, sorr, but that moight not be me age," with a blush.

"Did you land in New York?"

"No, sorr, I landed in Newport."

"Did the steamer land in Newport?"

"No, sorr, it landed in New York."

There was a general smile, in which the attorney did not share.

"You mean you came to Newport by another steamer?"

"I think so, sorr."

"How long were you in New York?"

"Twinty days in quarterteen."

"Where did you say?"

"Shure, in quarterteen."

"Oh," exclaimed the attorney, as a ray of light dawned within him; "how long have you been in this country?"

"Since the tinth of last Siptimber."

"Did you come straight from Newport to this city?"

"I went to Miss Flood's."

"Who told you to go there?"

"A friend I met, Dinnis O'Hooligan."

"Did you know him in Ireland?"

"No, sorr; I met him on the steamer."

"Have you seen him since?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Where?"

"At mass."

"More than once?"

"I think so."

"Is that since you have been working with Mrs. Kendall?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Has he ever called to see you?"

"No, sorr; I think not."

"Why?"

"Shure, sorr, how can I tell ye's, excipt he said his name was no more Dinnis?"

"Did he have an alias, then? What was it?"

"No, sorr; his name was n't Elias."

"And have you seen or heard of him since?"

"Oh no, sorr."

With a nod of encouragement intended to reassure the simple mind of the witness, the attorney leaned forward. The crowded court-room was as still as if it had been empty.

"What time did you leave the house on the night of the murder?"

"Eight o'clock, sorr."

"Where did you go?"

"I went to confession."

"What time did you come back?"

"Elivin o'clock."

"Was the cook in the kitchen when you came in?"

"No, sorr."

"What did you do then?"

"Do thin? I tuk me hat off and shtarted upshtairs in me stocking feet."

"Why did you take off your shoes?"

"Miss Alys ordhered me when I come in late to go to bed softly an' not wake the ladies."

"Did you go straight to your room?"

"No, sorr, I wint into the dining-room."

"Why did you go in there?"

"To see if I had locked up my silver."

"Did you ever forget to lock up your silver?"

"Oh no, sorr."

"Do you do this every night before you go to bed?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Are you sure?"

"No, sorr."

This contradiction, so unexpected by the attorney, created quite a laugh, which the Judge suppressed. Frowning at the audience, the attorney hurried on: —

"Did you lock the silver that night?"

"Yes, sorr."

"What did you do with the key?"

"I put it in the blue cup where Miss Alys told me."

"Can you hear in the dining-room what is said in the library?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Can you hear when the curtains are drawn?"

"No, sorr."

"Are the folding doors ever shut?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Do you ever shut them?"

"No, sorr."

"Who does?"

"Shure, an' I don't know."

"Did you ever hear Miss Kendall talking about Mr. Durgin?"

"Oh yes, sorr."

"Did she ever say anything kind about him?"

"No, sorr."

"Did she ever say anything ill-natured?"

"Yes, sorr — only oncet. She told Mrs. Kendall she 'd loike to have the sticken of him."

"What do you mean?"

"She loike to stick him, sorr."

"How did you happen to hear that?"

"I was pakin through the curteens."

"Are you in the habit of doing that?"

"Oh no, sorr."

"But you often listened?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Did you ever hear anything about yourself?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Anything good?"

"No, sorr."

"What did Mrs. Kendall answer when Miss Kendall said she wanted to stick him?"

"She said she ought to be ashamed on herself, and what would Mr. Teunis think?"

"Did Miss Kendall have anything in her hand when she said this?"

"She had the silver hairpin with the wheel on the handle."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Yes, sorr. I saw her."

"Was that always on the library table?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Ever since you came to the house?"

"Yes, sorr."

"What was it used for?"

"To shplit books and letters."

"Did you ever handle it yourself?"

"No, sorr."

"Did n't you ever touch it?"

"Oh yes, sorr; I dusted it."

"Did you ever touch it for any other purpose?"

The girl nodded with a blush.

"For what purpose?"

"To clane me finger nails in the mornin' afore the family came down."

"Then you know whether the point was sharp or dull? Which was it?"

"Sharp."

"Was it stiff?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Could it bend?"

"I never see it."

"Have you seen this letter-opener you describe since the night of the murder?"

"No, sorr."

"Have you searched for it?"

"Yes, sorr, the family have and so have the ladies and all the police gentlemen. The spalpeens hunted me bed and me bandbox."

"How long before the murder did Miss Kendall use the expression 'I should like to stick him'?"

"It was the evening the lady scolded me for the breakin' of her cup."

"Didn't you break it?"

"No, sorr. It lept out of me hand."

"What night was that?"

"Friday night."

"Eight days before the murder?"

"Yes, sorr."

"What time did you come into the dining-room on the night of the murder?"

"About a little after ten."

The attorney looked a little dazed at this contradiction, but hurried on.

"Was anybody in the library?"

"Miss Alys and Mr. Aylmer."

"Were the folding doors shut between the dining-room and the library?"

"No, sorr."

"How do you know?"

"I looked through the porteers."

"What did you do that for?"

"Shure Mr. Teunis' lovemakin' was so swate."

"Are you in the habit of listening in the dining-room to what goes on in the library?"

"Oh no, sorr."

"But you often do?"

"Oh yes, sorr."

"How long did you stay there listening?"

"Until Miss Alys told Mr. Teunis to go home."

"Then, what did you do?"

"I went back through the panthry to go up shtairs."

"What stopped you?"

"I heard Mr. Bruce come in, an' I knew that meant a shindy. Then I ran back to the dining-room."

"What did you see there?"

"Mr. Bruce said something. I could n't hear what he said, when Mr. Teunis shlapt him in the jaw."

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Aylmer hit Mr. Durgin in the face?"

"Yes, sorr, shure he did. Would n't you?"

"Do you know he did?"

"Yes, sorr, for Miss Alys jumped betwain them."

"You saw the blow, or heard it, did you?"

"No, sorr. They were both riddy fur a foine foight."

"Then what happened?"

"Miss Alys opened the door, and tould Mr. Teunis to go. 'Go,' she said, an' he wint."

"Then what did she do?"

"She slammed the door in his face, an' axed Mr. Bruce to come in the library. I thin shlipped behind me porteer. I knew there was the divil to pay now."

"Was the library door shut after the two came in?"

"Yes, sorr. She shut the door."

"Who came in first?"

"Miss Alys did."

"How was the room lighted?"

"By one gas."

"Could you see plainly from behind the curtains?"

"As plain as day, sorr."

"Could you see whether Miss Kendall picked anything from the centre-table?"

"I could n't see that, sorr. It was too dark."

"Then it was not as plain as day?"

"No, sorr."

"Who spoke first?"

"She did. She said: 'Ye's must n't niver spake to Mr. Teunis agin, or ye 'll lave the house, or I will,' says she."

"Did she say anything else?"

"She said something about a club. I don't remimber."

"Was it a threat?"

"Yes, sorr, I think so."

"Was Mr. Aylmer's name mentioned in connection with the club?"

"No, sorr. She said she could n't do it with a club. I don't remimber that."

"Could you see whether Miss Kendall had anything in her hands?"

"No, sorr; but I think she did. She had both hands togither in front of her."

"You think she might have concealed some weapon, that letter-opener, for instance, in her hands at this time?"

"Yes, sorr."

"How did she look?"

"Tirrible, sorr. Me legs was givin' way. I was afraid I would distarb the procadings. I knew it was coming."

"Why did n't you speak?"

"I could n't, fur me tongue was dhry an' shtuck to me mouth loike floi-paper."

"Now, what did you see Miss Kendall do?"

"She crept up soft loike behind Mr. Bruce."

"Did he hear her?"

"Mother of Nations! I did n't hear her meself."

"What happened then? Speak slowly."

"She put up her hand with the silver hairpin in it, an' shtruck him in the back. So help me Holy Mother, she did."

"Did you see this?"

"I run to me room an' hid me head under the pillow, I was so froightened."

"Did you see Miss Kendall strike Mr. Durgin?"

"Oh, yes, sorr."

"Did you hear him groan or fall?"

"No, sorr; I was in me room thin."

"Did you call for help?"

"I was so wake I could n't."

"Did you know he was killed?"

"I niver thought of such a thing."

It had been noticeable to a few nearest her that Miss Kendall was greatly excited by the testimony of the witness. Whenever she looked up at her former servant her face grew pale and paler with indignation. Her eyes flashed from the witness to her lawyer as the Irish girl delivered her deadly shots. Every now and then Miss Kendall made a motion as if to arise and confront the witness.

"Don't, don't, Alys! You will only hurt your case. Your turn will come soon," whispered Aylmer.

"If any of those men," she said bitterly, "had been housekeepers and had ever trained a raw girl, they would know the value of this testimony."

Mr. Johnston nodded thoughtfully.

"It is n't possible that such testimony can indict?" asked Teunis Aylmer in a low voice.

"Anything is possible," replied the lawyer evasively.

While the two gentlemen were talking they had for the moment left the prisoner unnoticed, and when they turned at the rustle of the crowd, they saw that she had risen to her feet.

Overwhelmed by a moral indignation surging

beyond control, she stood rigid as a stone shaft, facing the witness. Slowly she raised her ungloved hand, and in perfect silence pointed a long, white finger at the Irish girl. It was the accused accusing the accuser. It was the mistress silencing the tongue of the maid. It was honor demanding truth. It was unswerving intellectual perception shaming the vagaries of a befogged mind. It was a magnificent challenge to the good sense of the court. It was one of the psychological arguments which the law does not recognize. This action, spontaneous, scornful, unrehearsed, for the moment carried the breathless court-room with her.

For a few seconds Maggie Sheehan looked at her mistress boldly and defiantly, and then burst into tears. Miss Kendall resumed her seat, and the district attorney begged his honor for a recess. This the Judge hastily granted.

And now Alys Kendall was hurried in a swift sluiceway towards her fate. The dizzy machinery of the law drew her in. It did not occur to her that her unimpeachable character, her high birth, her delicate rearing, her honorable connections, could count for nothing in the court-room in favor of her probable innocence. Her own testimony went for less.

When the Judge bound her over for the grand jury her mother died. Teunis Aylmer brought her the news. She received it without tears or a sob. She said in a voice that scared him : —

"Don't try to comfort me. There is nothing to be said. It is all part of the whole thing."

In six weeks the grand jury brought in an indictment against her. The vote stood seventeen to seven.

"I don't see how they can," she said. "I don't see how they *can!*"

Aylmer tried to buoy her up with weak hopes.

"The trial will save you," he ventured.

She shook her head; but in her heart she expected that it would. But the trial came and was over like a whirlwind. It lasted three days. The prisoner sat hidden in the fresh crêpe which she wore for her proud mother's memory. When the jury filed out, she threw aside her long veil, and leaned forward with a smile. It was evident that in spite of everything she expected an acquittal.

But Hardwick Johnston did not smile. A disagreement was the most he hoped for.

The hours seemed minutes. The jury returned solemnly. What does this hush betoken? Men do not look so grave when they grant liberty. Guilty of murder in the second degree? Imprisonment for life? Impossible! Incredible! Inevitable! Irrevocable!

The lovers' eyes leaped to each other. She sat straight and still, but she saw him totter before her.

A cry rang through the court: —

"Room there! Some one has fainted! Give the lady air!"

"No! My God, it's a man! It is her lover!"

Her eyes followed them, hungering, while they bore him out.

"You must arise now, Miss Alys," said Hardwick Johnston brokenly. The tears streamed down his face in sight of all the court.

She looked very girlish and small as she stood up to receive her sentence. Hard, gray-bearded men surrounded her and towered above her.

"She looks like a kitten in a kennel of mastiffs," thought her lawyer.

"What have you to say why the sentence of the law should not be pronounced upon you?" So said the Judge in a deep and ringing voice. Sobs were heard about the room; but the prisoner was tearless. The face of the Judge twitched.

A small, unsteady voice broke the stillness, and as it proceeded it increased in volume and in power.

"Before God," said Alys Kendall with the solemnity of one who utters her last words, "I am an innocent woman. I am no more guilty of this deed than you are. You have made a horrible — you have made a criminal mistake, and may God have mercy on your soul."

Alys Kendall went to prison, to be immured with thieves and murderers and prostitutes. And though a few shook their heads doubtfully, the case was soon forgotten, and the Governor and his council refused to consider pardon on the plea that it would not do for American law to discriminate in favor of the highly born.

And an ancient, refined, and honorable family

was blasted, and an Irish emigrant, an ignored servant, a cipher in society, did it.

. . . . . .

Hardwick Johnston sat in his office turning over a letter that he had received that morning. He had become a grayer man than he was a few months ago. New lines on his face, deep and sallow, told the tale of irreparable disappointment. At present he was carrying the burden of Miss Kendall's miserable existence and was himself wrought into a very nervous condition. He felt positively irritated by Teunis Aylmer's continual and harassing demands. This young man had long since given up his business, and had devoted himself to desperate schemes for the release of his betrothed. It was evident to the lightest observer that his heart was broken. He haunted Mr. Johnston's office with new applications for pardon signed by hundreds who gave their names more in pity for the pale and desolate man than for the unseen object of his adoring toil. Even upon this particular morning, while the lawyer was deciphering the rude chirography of a letter in his hand, he heard the familiar knock, and with a sigh called the haggard man in.

The defense as well as the prosecution had received innumerable communications from the inevitable busybodies who are "touched" by such a case. Some of them professed to have committed the crime, and others offered to discover the missing letter-opener, and the criminal. Many of these letters were insulting. A few were commendatory.

Of late, "cranks" had written less frequently. There was an impatient movement in Mr. Johnston's glottis as he finished this letter, and then threw it over to Teunis Aylmer carelessly.

"You can look this clew up if you want to. It's about the twentieth, I should say; but this fellow seems to write from prison. It is dated Sing Sing, and postmarked New York."

Aylmer took the letter eagerly, and read it aloud as well as he could. It was written on soiled paper, but surprisingly well spelled.

I 'm a lifer and might as well blow on myself. You 'll find that queer little dagger with M. L. S. 178 something on it, behind a Sapolio advertisement in the Twenty-third street station on the Sixth avenue down town side. That 's proof enough that I killed him. I was hidden behind the sofa in that room since 4 o'clock. I was there to swab the silver and anything else I could crib. That fool of a girl Maggie put me on to it, but she did n't mean to. She did n't know I was there; she ain't to blame; but she lied like h—l at the trial. When the young lady left after giving the gentleman Jerusalem, I peeked out a little too far and the feller saw me. I don't know how it happened. Nobody knows, but he went for me, and I grabbed the dagger from the table and we grappled, and I put my hand around and hit him from behind in a place I knew. Of course, he dropped. It did n't take long enough for noise. Then I walked out the front door and was in New York the next day. I had no idea the judge would send an innocent lady up for that. The law is dam queer. I have

pals as innocent as that lady, sent up, two of them for life. But I ain't one of them. I only heard of the lady's being sent up to-day from a friend of mine come to make a six years' visit. I beg her pardon. If I 'd been out it never would have happened. Lucky Dave goes out to-day and he mails the letter for me. If it went through here they 'd drop on it. They 're jest like us. They all run in one gang. I was sent up in New York jest three days after I killed that man Durgin. A woman where I boarded fell down stairs and happened to break her neck. Yours truly,

JOHN CALVIN, alias BLACK CROOK,
nay DENNIS O'HOOLIGAN.

The two men looked at each other. Teunis Aylmer brought his trembling hand upon the table with a crash: —

"I 'll hunt that clew down!"

"Well," said Hardwick Johnston slowly, "take two officers with you for witnesses, and — good God! I 'll go myself."

They went together. A New York inspector of police heard the story with a shrug, but condescended to accompany them to the Twenty-third Street elevated station. He remembered perfectly that a notorious crook, Dennis O'Hooligan, with many aliases, was sentenced for life for murdering a woman about the time of the Kendall trial. The famous Nuremburg letter-opener was discovered, and the murderer with it. No doubt remained of it. The press, with its natural suppleness, turned right about face and began to ask ugly questions of the

prosecution. The judicial officers explained, without apology, that they were guided by the evidence, and that mistakes must be expected in the history of human law. They added that to secure the guilty the innocent must sometimes be sacrificed, and that any well-regulated individual would accept such a mishap without complaint, for the good of the whole.

A requisition upon the authorities of Sing Sing for the loan of their prisoner brought Dennis to the scene. He described the interior of the Kendall house and the last interview of Alys Kendall with Bruce Durgin too accurately for a doubt. He was immediately recognized by Maggie Sheehan, who was found in a third-rate intelligence office, awaiting a new situation.

"How dared you perjure yourself, and swear that you saw Miss Kendall kill Mr. Durgin?" demanded the Judge fiercely.

"Shure, Holy Mother, Mother of Nations, I thought I did! I told the thruth! I thought I did!"

So said Maggie, scared and crying. She had nothing more to say.

A few hot-headed people suggested mobbing; but this was in a State where nothing illegal is done.

. . . . . .

Hardwick Johnston carried the Governor's pardon to the State's prison. The warden inspected it and took him to Miss Kendall's cell.

"I wish to be the first one to meet her," he said, "when she puts her foot across the threshold."

The iron door opened stubbornly. She was lying on her cot. The overseer had found her too weak to work, but the prison doctor had not ordered her to the hospital. He intimated that the disease — he called it the "disorder" — was rather of the mind than of the body.

"Well," she said to the warden in a hollow voice. "What do you want now? Why can't you leave me alone?"

"I am happy to inform you, Miss Kendall," said the prison officer in his airiest tone, "that the Governor has granted his pardon, and you are free."

Mr. Johnston stepped forward with a paper in his hands.

The prisoner slipped her feet to the floor and sat upon the edge of her pallet. She looked from one to the other incredulously.

"You see," explained the lawyer, "my dear Miss Alys, the real murderer has been discovered."

At that word she sprang to her feet. She stood tall and stately in her felon's dress. The prison seemed suddenly to dwarf away before the high-born figure in its coarse gray gown and gingham apron. She took the pardon in her white hands. Before a man of the three could stay her she had torn it from end to end and flung it on the stone floor.

"Let the Governor ask *my* pardon! How dare he pardon me?"

In the beauty of outraged innocence she stood quivering. One little piece of the torn pardon had clung to the hem of her dress. She stooped to sweep it off. As she did so she wavered and, moaning, fell to her cot. She was very weak. Teunis Aylmer pushed in and caught her.

"I will not, I cannot go — this way," she sobbed. "I am innocent, and he has no right to pardon me." Then she broke down and cried like any other woman.

The eyes of the warden and the lawyer questioned each other. Then the warden winked.

"Miss Kendall, excuse me, but you have no longer any right here," said the officer judicially. "It is against the law, you know;" he began to stumble in his eagerness. "The fact is, you are trespassing, and you must go."

Teunis Aylmer, with a quick motion, swathed her in a heavy cloak which he carried upon his arm. It was her mother's fur-lined circular that covered her prison dress. His own breast hid her wasted face as he carried her down the stairs.

But who shall atone for the honest and terrible mistakes of misled intelligence in the administration of human law? Who shall atone for the slaughter of character, the ruin of a home, and the shattered life of a gentle girl? Who shall atone? Who shall protect?

"I will," said Teunis Aylmer, with quivering lip, as he folded the broken girl to his arms.

Across the continent, in another State, as far as possible removed from the protection of what we call civilization, this experienced couple are trying to forget, to be happy, and to be free.

A ROMANCE OF THE FAITH.

THE house of Terakh was astir. Feverish activity was manifest from the outer court to the inner sanctuary. Black slaves from Cush hurried noiselessly: they carried food for the family; they sprinkled the floors with perfumed water; a few paced the high wall that surrounded the house. Of these the chief was watching for the rising of the sun, while the others peered down the dark street toward the bridge and the city wall as if awaiting an honored guest.

It was the month of the Altar of Righteousness, and the fourteenth day of that month was nearly at hand. That was the day and night of all the year dedicated to the worship of the moon-god Hurki. Thousands were already encamped within and about the gates of Ur, the capital city of the Chaldeans, ready to participate in the splendid ceremonials of the sacred time.

The worship of the gods demanded a profession which has gradually faded away until it has become extinct. It was an occupation which was the very foundation of the arts of painting and of sculpture; it was a mystery rather than a craft; it was a charge that the state committed to the hands of one family only; it was a vocation that demanded a

rigid adherence to rules, the origin of which was lost in the mists of history. It also called for a creative fancy that was fitted to inspire the fervor of a fanatic people. He who followed its pursuits, though admitted to the esoteric secrets of a jealous idolatry, did not share in its administration. He inspired the influence of an erosive priesthood, but did not wield it. Without him even the gods were impossible, and religion was dead. Men must see what they worship, and Terakh, like his family before him for many generations, was a carver of wood, a hewer of stone, a maker of gods. Even now, in the black of the day, while it was yet cool, he was standing before a terrible image in stone upon which he was chiseling the finishing touches.

The room was square and high. A flickering lamp suspended from the ceiling made the grotesque face of the sitting statue scowl and grimace as if it were alive. Its life-size stone arms were extended with a gesture at once horrible and caressing. Its stone face, bending forward, had been cut into ferocious lines by Terakh, and was as much the embodiment of malignity as rude art could make it. A bloodthirsty god, this Hurki, impatient for the ghastly sacrifice which every year placed upon his arms a living babe, the first-born of a helpless household, the darling of some doomed home.

The old man stepped back, viewing his masterpiece with a grave smile of satisfaction. He was a tall man, as lean as a starving faith. His straight white beard swept his waist; his low cap, which

had been at one time ornamented with two red horns that stood upright, had lost one altogether, while the other had a listless droop; his robe had been originally an elegant garment, flounced and striped and fringed, but now it was dingy and frayed, and the hole through which his left arm protruded had a gaping rip. It was the costume of a man indifferent to opinion, too old to make dress a matter of moment, who lived for achievement rather than for luxury. Yet Terakh was one of the princes of Ur. He was a friend and counselor of the great king, he was beloved by the priests, he was a patriarch in the land, and his family had preferment among the people. In a nation that worshiped images, what might not be given to him who alone was the maker of the gods themselves?

Terakh had a curious expression of great pride and of passionate longing. It was a face of sorrow and disappointment. His was a countenance in which religious enthusiasm was lacking. Was it because the maker of gods could not worship them? The curl of his lip as he stood there alone, admiring and disdaining his handiwork, seemed ready to utter the hearts of all the priests of antiquity, — "Thou art a god for the people, but not for me." With a breath of relief Terakh cast his bronze hammer and his chisel upon the tiles. The moon-god was finished.

And now, before the dawn, a caravan could be heard approaching the house of Terakh. Riders

on velvet-footed camels preceded the motley cavalcade with great dignity; while behind them wild-looking retainers upon stallions drove a cloud of sheep and goats up the narrow streets, until they huddled, trembling and panting, before the gate that shut off the huge court and the house of Terakh from the city. Situated next to the temple wall, Terakh's establishment was a village in itself. It had courtyards, a large inn for guests, a garden, and fountains, — enough room for a regiment of men and cattle.

By this time the city was awake, and the sun was about to arise. Citizens gaped at the unusual sound.

"It is the son of Terakh from the desert," they said one to another.

"It is he! It is he!" cried the slaves on the lookout.

In the confusion of answering shouts the gate opened. A young man upon the foremost camel rode impatiently in. His retinue remained impatiently behind. With the ease of an athlete he swung himself from his high seat before the camel had time to kneel. When he touched the ground he was seen to be a mighty man. Even in the dark of the dawn he was seen to be a man of beauty. His face quivered with expression. He had the eyes of a thinker; some might have called them the eyes of a mystic. These were set deep, after the manner of those who meditate on the problems of life. They indicated a nature that was contem-

plative, and at the same time capable of great practical force, in all ages a rare combination. Bounding to the threshold, he fell upon his face before a woman. "My mother!" he cried in tones of Oriental reverence.

"Arise, my son. Thou comest with the blessing of the light of the gods."

"Shamshu is arisen!"

"The Lord of Fire liveth!"

"Great is Shamshu!"

The cry went from mouth to mouth. Instantly men and women, free-born and slaves, struck attitudes of devotion, and worshiped the risen sun. Like a miracle the Oriental dawn had come and gone. Suddenly, as if awakened from a trance, the birds started to sing, and the life of another day in sacred Ur began.

"My brethren, are they well?"

"They are at worship, and they are well," said Antelai, wife of Terakh.

"And my father, is he well? His name is last upon my lips, for my heart faileth me to ask. Is my father well?"

"He is well, my son, and waiteth for thee in the presence of his latest god."

"May Ilu be thanked for thy good words, dear mother. I go to my father. Behold, I have brought five hundred of the first-born of my flocks for my father and for the sacrifice." He waved his hand toward the bleating herd which the men were penning in its quarters.

"Thine hands drop fatness," said Antelai adoringly.

Her son strode over the threshold. As he did so, Antelai poured water upon the sill as an omen of prosperity, and muttered an invocation. Through well-known passages the young man hurried. His heart beat high as he stopped before the entrance and the familiar tapestry. The old man, who had controlled his own impatience almost to bursting, waved the curtain aside with slow dignity.

"O my father!"

"My son!"

Before the statue of Hurki — before the grinning god — Terakh and Abu-ramu, kneeling, clasped and kissed.

"Haran is my eldest, Nakhor is my youngest, but thou art the mightiest and the best-beloved of them all," said Terakh, with a gesture of blessing and with much emotion.

Twelve times the moon had encircled the earth since Abu-ramu had visited his father's house. Ten years ago he had besought Terakh for his portion of the inheritance. This he had taken, and had changed into flocks the rugs and robes, the slaves and lands, the wheat and barley, the gold and silver, that had come to him, and had gone to the desert. There, sheltered by his roving tent, and protected from robbers by the courage which he taught his followers, he had increased his wealth tenfold, and had made his influence among the wandering tribes of the region so powerful that

they called him Abu-ramu, the "exalted father." This name clung to him during all his stirring adventures until his death. For by birth, by intelligence, by imagination, and by fortune, the son of Terakh was a prince among the people; and Amraphel, the king of Ur and of Shinar, feared the independence of no other man in his kingdom as he did that of the young owner of man-servants and maid-servants, and of cattle like the stars in number, who already, in his youth, was respectfully called "the father" of the plains of Shinar. Even Terakh felt a secret awe of his son when he looked into the young man's unfathomable eyes, — eyes fearless under the might and blight of a priesthood that multiplied omens and incantations and gods until the people trembled under a despotism more withering than that of the whip. It was even possible for a man to flee from the slavery of Amraphel; but who could escape the curses of Hea, or Ishtar, or Zamama, or Nebo, or Shamash, or Hurki, and the persecutions of a hundred other minor gods, who made themselves dreaded and dreadful under the rapacious guidance of the priests?

"It is my will that thou serve Hurki, the god of the gods, in the great temple," Terakh had said to his son when the lad ceased to cut his forelock and attained his majority. The youth had looked at Terakh searchingly, and for a while remained silent. Then he said slowly, and with the reverential accent due to his father, who had over him the power of life and death: —

"O my father, is it not enough for thee to make the gods? When I see from what thou makest them, a voice within me forbids me to interpret them to the people. Indeed, I know not how. I would be a shepherd, unconfused by many gods, or else I would depart to a far country."

This remarkable reply was not braggadocio, but the expression of a heroic conviction; and Terakh, being a wise man, had given his son his own way.

Now Terakh turned to the completed statue and looked at it significantly. He was a man vain of his skill. He was the greatest sculptor of his race, and his gods commanded fabulous prices.

Abu-ramu understood what was expected of him, and inspected Hurki attentively. He regarded the god as a man might a toy that he had once played with and caressed.

"He is a very terrible god. I should think that he was your best." The son, thinking that he had done his duty, turned from the god he despised to the father he loved.

"You did not bow before him when you entered," said Terakh, trying to look sternly at his favorite boy. "It is well that only I noticed the neglect, for the king enforces his decree against those who do not bow down and worship Hurki, the shining lord of the month."

Abu-ramu turned his penetrating gaze upon the old man. Terakh had not the moral courage of his son. Abu-ramu had known the emancipation of solitude; he had the education of the desert.

"Hurki has not yet been set upon his throne, my father. And thou, O my father, ought to know Hurki's power, for thou hast made him. As for the king — a greater one than Amraphel or Hurki is my guide. I am not afraid." As Abu-ramu said this, he made a sudden and beautiful obeisance to something invisible; this silenced the elder man. What new god had Abu-ramu discovered? Terakh did not ask. He changed the conversation, but questioned himself whether he had what is worse than the overflow or the drought — a heretical son.

"Iskah becometh a priestess of Hurki, — that is the only new thing I have to relate." Terakh looked upon his statue doubtfully and lovingly as he spoke. His son also looked upon the god, but darkly.

"I have not seen the little maiden for many years. She was visiting Sippara when I was here last. Where is she?"

"She is no longer a little maid. She is as stately as a royal palm, and as beautiful as a lily. She heedeth not command or advice. She will not bend to her parents, nor to thy mother, nor to me. Haran hath given her to Hurki. He can do naught with her."

Abu-ramu smiled. The old man had evidently found out that it was easier to mould a god than a girl. Abu remembered a dark skin and a darker eye, a light laugh and lighter feet, and gestures and smiles that had mocked him for his gravity;

and yet he thought that Iskah, his half-brother's daughter, had always respected his preferences after her own way. He used to play with her and fondle her as he would one of his greyhounds. She used to be a wild, pretty thing, with once in a while a look as if longing to be tamed. The recollection of those days was pleasant to Abu-ramu. He had man-servants and maid-servants, and they had wives and husbands, but the "exalted father" of Shinar had neither wives nor concubines. "What a priestess!" he repeated to himself with a twitching lip. "What will Hurki think of her?" Aloud he said again: —

"Where is she, my father?"

"Haran is within the gate, and Iskah is here, too. She feedeth the birds in the garden about this hour. Go and seek her, for I think that in her heart she heedeth thee." And Abu-ramu went into the paradise of palms to look for Iskah.

Shamshu, the morning sun of life, had arisen only a few minutes, but the sacred city of Ur already smoked with the heat. To-morrow was the seventh day, the white day of the year, and thin columns of incense ascended like dark petitions from the huge ziggurat. The house and the courts and gardens of Terakh adjoined the vast inclosure of the temple of Hurki. Already the confused cries of merchants and votaries, and the authoritative shouts of priests and soldiers, were shrill upon the motionless air. To-morrow would come the ceremonies, the sacrifices, the dedication of the new god

miraculously bestowed upon the temple; to-morrow the full moon and the incarceration of Iskah.

As Abu-ramu advanced, tall and commanding, through the court to the inclosed garden, his retainers one by one saluted him with affectionate reverence. They had the air of men ready to forego life or faith for their master. Their hands twitched with lawlessness, and their beards trembled with wild daring that even Abu-ramu had found it hard to subject.

"He ought to be king of Shinar and of Ur. Who is there like unto him?" they whispered, nodding at one another and at him, as the son of Terakh, clad in a sheepskin, with a turban of camel's hair, and with bare feet, strode into history.

The paradise was cool. Grateful shades lay under the stately date-palms. The garden was intersected by flowing canals, and the growth of flowers, of lotus, almonds, pomegranates, and acacias was intoxicating. Unexpectedly, one would find an altar hidden in a grove. Yonder an open space was tiled for a bathing-pavilion. The garden was two acres in area, — a princely size for a town garden, — and every foot of it was busy with growth. Only the family of Terakh and his intimate friends had access to the spot. Melons, citrons, figs, and grapes were carefully reared, and abundant. Rare odors of spices and imported flowers traveled lazily about the inclosure. Ah, the contrast to the desert! What a relief from the withering sky and the brazen battle with the sun!

Abu-ramu drank in the cool fragrance that leaped to meet him. He loved this paradise almost as much as he did his father. His senses, refined by the renunciation of the desert, by the mystic thoughts that are inspired through solitude, responded not to women, nor to the sensuous luxuries of wealth, but to perfumes and to natural shade.

"I do not think," he said in an undertone, as if talking to a blue lotus in the water by his side, "that Hurki is here."

"Aha, O Abu! Shall I tell the king?"

The son of Terakh stopped as if a javelin had whirred past his ear. He recognized the musical laugh, the tones of semi-sarcasm, which used to nettle or amuse him. But he was under the narcotic influence of the garden, and he forgot his natural dignity in the pleasure of seeing his little friend again. No rebuke sprang to his lips.

"It is Iskah," he said to himself, looking around. Then aloud: "Where art thou, Iskah? Show thyself, child. Come!"

The last exclamation of impatience was met with a mad, ringing shout. A white cloud seemed to arise from behind a cluster of pomegranates. It fluttered to his side.

"Child? O Abu!" it said in reproachful tones. "Behold!"

Iskah with a deft motion unwound a light veil that protected her from the heat. Her head, neck, and right arm blazed bare in the filtered sun. Abu-ramu started back with a rueful expression as he confronted the most beautiful woman in Ur.

"Iskah, my child — can it be thou?" he stammered.

The girl uttered another merry laugh.

"Tell me, O most ancient patriarch, am I a child?" As she said this, Iskah drew herself up superbly. A toss of her head, and her black hair formed a frame for her face. Her ruddy lips were slightly parted in an irresistible smile. Her olive skin, upon the delicate surface of which emotions had not yet left their imprint, was now dimpled with witching lines of laughter. Her eyes bubbled like springs. Her figure was as stately as a palm. Thus, after years of separation, Iskah, the daughter of Haran, confronted her kinsman.

While Abu gazed upon her beauty in a helpless way, she too looked upon him. And as she looked, his high stature, the comeliness of his features, the fire of command that quivered in his nostrils and shone in his eyes, above all, a spirituality that was foreign to her own nature, and which seemed to cover him like a precious ointment — these caused Abu-ramu to find renewed favor in the eyes of the maiden.

"There is none like unto him in Shinar," she thought; "but he shall never know it from me." Then she said aloud: —

"Why dost thou not salute me? Am I not a priestess of the house of Hurki? Thou must do me reverence." She advanced a step, cast from her countenance all girlishness, and assumed an expression of such pious dignity that Abu-ramu

involuntarily brought his right hand up in the recognized attitude of devotion. At this moment her eyes seemed to communicate secrets to the stars.

"Art thou a woman, Iskah, or a goddess?" asked Abu-ramu. He did not yet understand that modesty as well as caprice can, at a moment's notice, convert a guileless maiden into a consummate actress. The girl looked at him softly. To-morrow she was the moon-god's and the king's. Henceforth she would be imprisoned within the court of the mighty ziggurat. She dared not question herself as to the full meaning of this immurement. But at this hour she was free, and her favorite kinsman was with her. She said gently, with a sigh: —

"To-day, O Abu, I am a woman; to-morrow a goddess, if thou wilt. Come to the birds; I fear they will starve when I go. I feed them for the last time." With a sad smile she turned, and he followed.

Could this be Iskah? Abu-ramu felt himself confused. Was this the child he had chased like a butterfly through the paradise, and who fitfully allowed herself to be caught? He counted up the years. She could not be more than sixteen. Sixteen? Impossible!

Now Abu-ramu watched Iskah feeding her pigeons; her motions had matchless grace, her body undulated in perfect curves, and he remembered the ferocious leer of the stone god Hurki. His father was proud of it. The more horrible the god, the greater the art. But Abu-ramu's heart, culti-

vated in the loneliness of the desert to gentle thoughts, shrank from the hideous thing. In silence he continued to observe the maiden. Her slender height, her suppleness, and, above all, the queenliness of the pose of her head and neck, began to act upon him like fermented wine.

"Shall symmetry serve the misshapen? Shall beauty be priestess to a monster? Shall a white soul redden before nameless mysteries? Shall Iskah be a bond-slave to Hurki?" Such questions effervesced in his heart. His grasp tightened upon the bow that he carried in his left hand. He seethed to fight. But with whom should he do battle? Hurki? The king? The city? The nation? And for whom? Iskah? Why, ah, why, indeed?

"Thou lookest at me strangely," said the maiden, suddenly turning to him.

"Because thou wilt be priestess," answered Aburamu simply. Though his words were restrained, nevertheless his eyes betrayed his new feeling.

The girl looked at him gravely. Her levity had already fled like the lizard at her feet. His color had deepened under his beard. He appeared to her like a son of the morning. Iskah's heart almost suffocated her. True, she had prayed for him every day at her altar, that feverish winds and spells and malign gods might spare him; she had secretly gloried in his reputation and influence and wealth. He was as her pride would have him. And few are the noble women who find their soul's

desire. Heart's peers do not often meet. Why did the words of her kinsman give her such dangerous pleasure? Iskah was troubled because she could not understand her own emotions. She would be priestess, — yes, die before he should suspect them.

"My father does not think that way," she said coldly, "nor Terakh, nor my kinsmen. They say the god thirsteth for me. The will of my father is my law." She repeated the last slowly like an oracle.

"His will is abomination!" he cried.

"Hurki is a mighty god, and jealous of other gods," said Iskah in a reverent voice, but with a veiled twinkle as she saw his wrath on the increase.

"Hurki is a stone, and I will smite him!"

Abu-ramu, forgetting himself, uttered the treason and heresy of his heart as carelessly as the tamarisk blooms.

At this word the girl, well knowing the horrible punishment meted out to those who did not bow down and worship the popular god, sprang forward, and with a cry of fear put her hand upon his mouth.

"O Abu, the desert hath made thee mad!" She trembled, panting, as she spoke. "Peace!" she said, still holding her perfumed hand to his lips. "I fear some slave may hear thee, and tell the high priest, and thou diest."

"Dost thou care?" he whispered. Agitations new to him swept over him like the khamsin.

"O Ishtar!" she exclaimed, throwing her head back, forgetting herself.

At this artless mention of the goddess of love, the veil dropped from Abu-ramu's heart, and in that moment was revealed to him his soul's desire. His blood surged to his ears and deafened him. It mounted to his eyes and blinded him. He shivered like the motionless water when a stone falls upon it.

"Iskah," he said softly.

"Let me go!" She drew back, trying to unclasp his hands. "I did not mean it; Hurki would not do this."

"Iskah, I have need of thee," he whispered in a penetrating, low voice.

"And Hurki of me," she gasped.

"Hurki," he blazed, "shall have no part in thee, Iskah, for my love hath seized thee to be my wife."

He said this solemnly, like an oath, pointing, according to ancient custom, toward the rising of the moon as witness. The swift Oriental way of loving had taken him. He did not withstand such an intoxicating fate. Iskah repulsed him with her eyes, straightened herself with pretty hauteur, relaxed, and, mastered by his love, melted into his arms. Then did the two understand the meaning of the ancient proverb which tells us that a minute in the tent of the beloved one is equal to an eternity within the gate of the king. Gently Abu-ramu raised her face to his, and gazed into it with the intensity of an astrologer seeking for a sign in the heavens.

"Thou art more beautiful than the herald of the

morning," he said reverently. "Thy word is the breath of the gods. Thou enchainest me."

Iskah returned his look in rapture. Then her face trembled from her chin unto her eyes. Her tears began to fall slowly.

"Abu," she said, trying to hide her face in his mantle, "how didst thou know that I loved thee? For I put mine eyes in bond, and my lips were sealed, that no love might escape them. Why didst thou not come sooner, Abu? For my freedom taketh wings on the rising of the sun, and it is death for the priestess of Hurki the Brilliant to look upon men."

"Iskah," he said in a tone of command, "dost thou love me?"

She answered steadily: —

"Now thou knowest it, my lord. Thy yoke is upon my soul until my breath passeth to the west. Perhaps," she added, with inspired eyes, "until the gods are dead; but, alas! my body is Hurki's!"

When he heard these words, Abu-ramu expanded as if Nergal, the god warrior, had challenged him. Iskah looked at him in wonder. He seemed to grow in stature, and lightning played over his brow. He drew a long breath.

"Iskah, my beloved, now I will tell thee the hidden thing of my life. A new God hath sent his command unto me in dreams." He stopped, for his voice, charged with energy, choked him. Iskah stared at her lover incredulously, but his high mien constrained her respect.

"A new god!" she repeated. "Such a thing has not been heard of since the great gods fashioned men with the faces of ravens."

"There can be — there are no other gods besides Him," Abu-ramu continued hoarsely. "His countenance is as blinding as the sun. His voice is as soft as a whisper. I worship no other gods but Him, not even Hurki. My God, he is not stone. He is a spirit."

What was the meaning of these words? Iskah's beautiful face expressed a bewilderment which it was hard to enlighten. But she loved like the women of her race and time, who did not protest, but accepted the faith and will of a lover with his first kiss.

"What is his name? she asked in an awed tone. "Thou art his priest?"

"His name he has not revealed to me," answered Abu reverently. "He is the everlasting; Ilu Shaddai, the God Almighty. Hearken unto me," he continued, with a steady, rising voice, and clasping her hands tightly: "forget it not, fear not, tremble not, for my God, — the father of the great gods, whom diviners and augurs and soothsayers have never seen, for he is not made with hands, nor fashioned from stone or clay, — the supreme Ilu, shall establish my seat. He will build up my might. He will increase my papyri, my corn, my silver, my cattle, my furniture, and my servants in my hands. He will guide me to a better land. With the fruit of my loins he will enrich

the four corners of the earth, — for thou wilt be my wife."

Iskah was filled by the sound of these words, as a person standing in a belfry tower is filled with the sound of a great bell. Great hearts in all ages have made religion love, and love religion.

"Art thou greater than Hurki, O my lord?" asked Iskah, clinging to him in an ecstasy of terror.

"I have prayed to the great gods — to Ishtar, to Hea, to Anunit, to Nebo, to Shamash, and to the great moon-god Hurki, and verily my prayers are dust. I am greater than Hurki."

He uttered this mighty heresy slowly, with the conviction of a man who had thoroughly tested the subject. He had a grand look. The two trembled with the consciousness that this unique apostasy meant an epoch in Shinar.

"Thou art a god, O Abu, but art thou mightier than the king?" This Iskah said with the enlightenment of one who perceives the difference between the spiritual power of a stone god and the temporal power of a despot.

In answer the man of the desert grasped his weapon, and shook it exultingly.

"I have stretched the arch of the bow once, and King Amraphel has trembled. I have stretched it twice, and he has turned. The third time I stretch the wood a god shall tumble to the earth, and a king shall topple from his throne."

"Abu," said the woman, hiding her face, "boast not for my sake! Spare thyself! The god claimeth me."

"If I smite the god, wilt thou be my wife?" he demanded imperiously.

"If thy god is greater than my god, and thy hand heavier than the king's, and thou win me from the high altar of Hurki, thy will shall be my will, and thy handmaid will follow thee as thy nod leadeth her."

A shrill voice from the other end of the garden interrupted their whisper.

"At the hour of sacrifice I will call upon my God," whispered Abu-ramu significantly. "Be thou ready, and fear not."

They clasped, they kissed, they parted. Like a white bird, or like the princess that she was, Iskah swept away. Even at the gate of the women's court, their eyes embraced. The great love she gave bore Iskah along on the torrent of Abu-ramu's conviction. In those old days women gave themselves blindly when they loved. They did not reason about it.

"My love, Abu — O terrible Hurki!" she cried, flinging herself exhausted before her inner sanctuary. "O thou new God, if it be in thy power, make me his wife!"

The morning of the full moon opened as softly as the leaves of a sensitive-plant. It was in truth the "white day" of the year. Even Hurki, the lord of building and of rest, must have been proud in his granite heart of this perfect day, set like an emerald in the jeweled month of Sin. Not a leaf

stirred in the limpid air. Even the dizzy radiations caused by the heat were absent on the near horizon. It was as if a cool glamour had descended from heaven to earth to vivify men's bodies and to bless the sacrificial day. The sun, like its priests and its temple, was bereft of malignant influence, and the strength of the full moon seemed to carry the value of the night into the richness of the morn. The magnificent and awful ceremonies that began with the rising of the sun, and that were to last seven days without intermission, meant many different things to the participants.

To Amraphel, the high priest, the king, the despot, they renewed a soul jaded with adoration and power. Interpreting Hurki, he became the central disk of the day.

To a father and mother forced into a hateful honor the white day became the black day. It had already snatched from their kisses their first-born baby boy. The modern imagination refuses to dwell upon the ghastly fate of the child. To the great throng in the temple court this was the opportunity of the year to show loyalty to the religion of their forefathers, to worship, to gossip, and to trade.

Terakh's statue of Hurki had been placed upon a huge altar facing the throne of the king. Surmounting a pyramid beside the tall ziggurat, it rose to a height of twenty feet. It towered above the other altars that smoked with the burnt-offerings of bullocks and rams slaughtered at daybreak.

Priests flitted here and there within the sacred inclosure, performing their complex and mysterious duties. At dawn the multitude had taken its position, ranged by families and tribes. The most eminent occupied the places nearest to the altars and to the sacrifices. Even now they began to be impatient for *the* ceremony of the festivity. The chief actors in the occasion were only two, the highest in the land — Amraphel, the priest-king, and Iskah, the new high priestess.

In the vast multitude that gaped at the high altar a spectator from the top of the ziggurat might have noticed several groups of scowling men. They seemed to shun observation and to be disguised. These were priests from the rival temples of Nana and Nebo, dressed in the garb of the common people. The worship of Hurki had engulfed all other religions in Ur, as well as the state itself. When the king gave a palmful to Hurki, he gave a pinch to Nana, and a cold nod to Nebo. Hurki's priests were fat, but Nana's were lean, and Nebo was oppressed with debt. To raise a disturbance in the courts of Hurki at the supreme sacrifice of the year was dangerous business, but it might be interpreted as an ill omen, and divert Amraphel from his religion. One mad devotee had actually raised the falsetto cry, "Beautiful is Nana, the goddess of Ur," but he had barely escaped with his life. These priests, banded together in a desperate alliance, pretended to be zealous for the sacrifices, while in reality they were only waiting for a favorable opportunity to start a riot.

In due time the omens were declared propitious for the sacrifice. Hurki was not as bloodthirsty as Nergal, god of the fierce midsummer sun, but once a year the king himself must place in his stone arms the first-born of a noble family. The priestess lighted the consuming fire.

"Look," said a citizen, nudging another; "look at the house of Terakh. They occupy the nearest place. He is in high favor. Behold the height of Abu-ramu, his son. What wild-looking men his servants are! There must be five hundred of them or more. Their faces are as the sons of thunder. Even the king scowls upon them."

"I understand," interposed his neighbor, "that Amraphel is jealous of the wealth of the son of Terakh. They say he meditates a descent upon his flocks in the desert. There will be a pretty fight. Hush! Give me room to fall on my nose, for the crier is ready."

The chant of the priests of Hurki now swelled to a deafening shout. In the midst stood the king, stretching out his right arm, on which a gold bracelet glittered. Upon his head a royal mitre rose like a column to a commanding height. The hymn of praise clashed to a climax of triumph: —

"*Thou through heaven and earth extendest goodness, not remembering wrong!*

"*Thou! thy will who knowest? Who with aught can it compare?*

"*Lord! in heaven and earth thy lordship! Of the gods none equals thee!*"

When the magnificent ode to Hurki came to this supreme end, stillness settled like an eclipse upon the thousands in the gate of the temple. With one accord the eyes of the multitude were raised to the statue of the god. In this oppressive silence the king mounted upon the steps of the stages that led to the summit of the altar. He cast a critical eye upon the fagots of precious wood heaped with frankincense that were to consume the poor babe, and a haughty look upon the expectant populace. As his gaze roved over the swaying multitude it was arrested by a strange sight. Beneath him and the altar, where an open space should have been left unimpeded, the tribe of Abu-ramu had advanced upon the priests. The shepherds had forced themselves inward almost to the sacred place itself. Fierce faces full of hate looked up to Amraphel. The king's practiced eye discerned the outline of a bow here, of a javelin there, and of quivers hidden beneath the ceremonial robes. A priest who had been haughtily shoved aside by this rudeness was fiercely reciting an imprecation against the men of the desert. These sleek servants of Hurki, ready to smite an inhabitant of the city, did not dare to meet with force the roughness of vulgar shepherds.

The people at a distance could not notice the insult to the sacredness of Hurki; only a few priests and the king comprehended the enormity of the insolence.

There was no time now for punishment. The

sacrifice must be offered on the ordained minute. The art of the diviner was inexorable.

"His trunk shall I cast to the dogs; of his manservants will I make me slaves; his cattle will I eat. I hold them here in a net," Amraphel muttered to himself, as he frowned upon Abu-ramu. But the son of Terakh was not looking at the king. With a disdainful brow he was measuring the stone god.

And now a murmur arose among the multitude. Then suddenly, like the appearance of a white meteor overshadowing all stars in a moonless night, riveting attention, compelling admiration, inspiring awe, there was seen beside the stone god Hurki a dazzling figure. It was the high priestess, and how she came there no man knew. A magnificent mitre arose from her head. This sacrificial ornament did not lend dignity to her royal figure; it confirmed it. Her robe, elaborate with flowers, fell like a cascade of white foam to her feet. In her arms she bore a babe. She carried it with the pride of a queen who presents the heir to her subjects for the first time. Her presence distilled solemnity. The glory of a pure heart shone about her. Before her the king was a dwarf. Beside her Hurki squatted like a toad. What woman, what priestess, what goddess, was there in Shinar like unto Iskah, the daughter of Haran? Standing before the people, carrying the child, in an attitude of unearthly repose, she gave to Abu-ramu's imaginative mind the impression of eternal mother-

hood. But her eyes were as restless as a bride's upon the marriage-eve. The king turned to her. At the first sight of her supreme beauty he gave a low exclamation of surprise. This Abu-ramu heard, and his breath came hot; he forced himself close to the altar.

As the priestess, with grave obeisance, gave the doomed infant into the hands of the king, the child cried. This penetrating wail was answered by a groan from the crowd. But the herald drowned the father's despair as he made proclamation: —

"*Whosoever at the sound of the cymbal doth not fall down upon his face and worship the moon-god Hurki, the god of gods, he shall be cast alive into the fiery furnace. Thus saith Amraphel, his high priest.*"

During the delivery of this time-worn proclamation Terakh had been casting uneasy glances at his son. Somehow he felt anxious about the outcome of the day. Whither might not fanaticism lead his impetuous and popular boy? Terakh had no real objection to a few heretical doubts as to the deity of Hurki, but he disapproved strongly of their expression. It was undiplomatic, nay, dangerous in the extreme. Open heresy might even involve his own home. Therefore, as a pillar of the state, as the maker of the god he worshiped, he watched Abu-ramu narrowly, with a growing sense of fear. In his heart of hearts the old image-maker had none too much of the national respect and adoration for Hurki; nevertheless, he was not ready to

be burned alive. He turned from his dissenting son, and made dignified preparations to fall upon his face.

Now, as the king could not take his eyes from the beautiful priestess, he did not observe the effect of the herald's conventional announcement upon the men of the desert.

These suddenly assumed the desperate and consecrated air of those who court martyrdom. Some flung their cloaks aside, and grasped their weapons. Each glued his eyes upon Abu-ramu. It was remembered that many of the household of Terakh joined in this unique demonstration.

As the last word of the crier died upon the stagnant air the multitude fell with a groan upon their knees, and hid their faces in the dust. Priests, soldiers, commoners, joined greedily in the abasement. At this supreme moment, with a bound, Abu-ramu cleared the space between himself and the altar. He leaped from stage to stage, and with marvelous power and dexterity he flung himself at and swung himself upon the altar beside Iskah. In his right hand he brandished a bronze mallet. It was the hammer with which Terakh had fashioned the stone god. The priestess did not curse the sacrilegist; she did not move; but a smile of welcome as evanescent as a northern light upon a southern sky passed over her lips. Then, with an exultant cry, the men of Abu-ramu swept like a sand-storm into the sacred circle, and inclosed the altar behind and in front.

As yet the worshipers did not know the extent of the awful sacrilege. But it happened that one looked, and then another, and before the breath grows cold, the mad multitude arose. They stood stupefied. A few cried, and execrated the profaners. But some looked on warily and silently. Many pressed forward; others turned to flee. Terakh, his household, and his slaves, with the tribal instinct, formed ranks to await the onset. They had seen the making of many gods, and were pious only as far as the law required.

"Men of Ur! Inhabitants of Shinar!"—Abu-ramu raised his voice like a hurricane, and dominated the vast temple court—"a God whose breath is mightier than the gods of Ur hath commanded me. Behold, I smite." With that incisive word he grasped the mallet in both hands, poised it on high, and then brought it with a crash upon the head of Hurki. Even where the mighty god sat, there he crumbled into dust.

The populace uttered a great cry. They grew into the ground with terror. Weak women fainted. Strong men became cold. Priests dropped to their faces, and, gasping, awaited the vengeance of the outraged god. But the zealous priests of Nana and Nebo signaled to one another with exultant looks, and locked their fingers on weapons concealed under their garments. With this blow against the superstition and the magic of the Akkadian priesthood perpetrated under the yoke of a ravaging despotism, in the heart of the mightiest temple of

the mightiest city of the Chaldeans, under the beard of the king himself, surrounded by walls and guards and priests and power, Abu-ramu towered above the wrath of gods and men.

Then, in the face of Ur, the son of Terakh committed his last and final enormity. A step brought him to the side of Iskah. Ignoring Amraphel, and casting a contemptuous glance upon the shattered god, he clasped her consecrated waist, and whispered in her ear: —

"Is not my God mightier than this Hurki? Maiden, follow me!"

For answer she thrust from her head the mitre of priesthood; with a beautiful gesture she crossed her arms upon her breast, and bowed before him. Still her face sought his as if they were alone. Unutterable love leaped from each to each. Knowing that they were to die, she accepted his doom; he received her sacrifice.

For an instant the two stood out before the world upon the desolate altar, as clear-cut as figures upon a signet. Then Amraphel the despot discovered his power. With a voice that carried its speaker's jealousy and terror and hatred and revenge, as the wind drives the rain, he cried out: —

"Priests of Hurki! Soldiers of Shinar! Away with them to the consuming furnace! Smite the house of Terakh! Consume the tribe of Abu-ramu. Even where they stand, smite ye them!" With that, forgetting the sacrifice in his arms, he dropped the babe, and stretched out his hand to arrest the son of Terakh.

Iskah swooped down upon the infant, which fell lightly upon the scented fagots. She seized it to her bosom, and unconsciously scattered the wood and heaping frankincense over the edge of the altar. Then she cast upon her lover the solemn and significant smile of one who believed herself to have dispersed the last remnant of an enslaving superstition. It was the first smile of a free soul.

"Stay me not, Amraphel, for my God leadeth me!" Abu-ramu shook off the king's hand. Then with bow and quiver upon his shoulder, with the hammer in his hand, he gathered Iskah in his arms, and with her the babe, gift of Hurki, and leaped from the edge of the altar, past the steps of ascent, over the heads of many of his own tribe, to the pavement below. Not for centuries, until the final destruction of Ur, did the legend of that leap cease to make the blood of strong men start. It was afterward whispered that the strange God whom he served upheld his feet that they were not dashed to certain death.

Then suddenly, at that moment, as if tortured to the deed, a priest of Nana plunged his knife into the back of a worshiper of Hurki. It was the madness for sublime suicide which sometimes seizes a fanatic. A servant of Nebo caught the fury, and courted the same fate for the sake of his neglected god. But the near multitude, horrified and cowed by Abu-ramu's deed, fled like sheep before the murderous priests. Farther away men caught the groans, and looked upon one another with suspicion.

Then a swift delirium seized upon them. The familiar smell of human blood expanded over the air, and intoxicated the devotees, who now became wild beasts. A frenzy, not uncommon in that wild age, possessed the people. They fell into indiscriminate massacre. Soldiers attacked priests, and priests turned upon the unarmed populace. The fury of an unknown god caused the parent to kill his son, and the son to spring upon the throat of his father.

All the while Nana and Nebo, seated upon their distant thrones of diorite, stared straight before them — and saw nothing.

Many centuries later, all the Jewish families in Egypt did a strange thing. Supernaturally guarded amid the wild terrors that were stalking through the land, they sprinkled blood upon their doorposts. By this mysterious means their first-born are said to have escaped the destroyer. By a like power, inexplicable, irresistible, the house of Terakh and the followers of Abu-ramu evaded the madness that smote the children of Ur. What led them unscathed through the midst of frightful confusion? It was as if they were protected by an invisible cloud. Only Amraphel glared at them from his lonely altar. At his incoherent shouts his people set upon one another the more savagely.

"My son, thou hast undone me!" cried Terakh, as the tide of fate swept them in one channel.

"My father, my God will protect thee. Follow thou him." So answered Abu-ramu, shortly and sternly.

"His will be done. I suppose I must." The old man said this with a wry face, thinking little of the danger to his life, but much of the loss of his art.

Antelai, his wife, struggling behind the old man, shed no tears. She obeyed her husband, but she adored her favorite son. Haran, the father of Iskah, and Nakhor, his brother, drawn into the retinue by tribal gravitation, marched with sullen faces. They did not share Abu-ramu's heresy, and it takes time for a superior man to compel the admiration of his kinsmen.

Like a torrent within a seething whirlpool the men of the desert advanced. They did not know much about this new God of Abu-ramu's. Their views of any assistance they were likely to receive from him were most uncertain. Thunderstruck at the sudden carnage about them, they awaited the expected assault. In a solid phalanx, frowning, resolute, unwavering, they divided the storm that waged about them.

"Father, we protect the princess!" shouted the warriors to their chief. "These citizens are as ants to our feet. This day shall we make thee king!"

For answer Abu-ramu pointed to the altar already in the distance. Upon it Amraphel still stood, raving at his subjects. He dared not trust himself in the court lest his perverted people slaughter him in their blind wrath. The nation would easily accept a revolution, this Abu-ramu

well knew; but the desecration of the god of the land, that could be atoned only by blood.

"To the house of Terakh — and then to the desert!" he commanded.

But thereupon, as if stung by a sudden impulse of revenge, Abu-ramu stood, and stretched his bow, and aimed an arrow at the monarch. Had his heart failed? — for his bow rested. Again the chief of shepherds stretched the arch, and for the second time a voice within bade him take the life of no man. Now for the third time he set his teeth, and raised his bow, and with an arm that knew not its own might drew the arrow to its head. The men of the desert and of the household of Terakh held their breaths to see Amraphel pierced. What a sight! What an opportunity! Even the king, by that horrible attraction which science ignores, stopped his execration, and, leaning forward, with hands apart, with body bent, with mouth open, and with eyes staring in terror, incapable of motion, awaited his death. A swift triumph lighted the features of Abu. After all, he felt that it was manlier to smite the king than the helpless god. Just as his forefinger was dropping the bowstring, Iskah raised the babe on high until its body touched the sharp bronze of the arrow.

In a country where life was a play, and in an age when murder was as common as a feast, Iskah uttered a phrase, memorable because of its originality, and which became a watchword of the new religion: —

"*Abu-ramu, thou shalt not kill!*" The priestess spoke. The lover obeyed. Overwhelmed by the revulsion of his escape, Amraphel, speechless, dropped upon the fragments of his god.

Thus the men, a thousand in number, of the united houses of Terakh and Abu-ramu, swept unharmed past the murdering populace, the butchering priests, the red-handed guards, the venerable temple-gate, — desecrated for the first time, — and leaving their old religion forever behind, outcasts from Hurki and Ur, passed into the silent street, and down it they marched silently until they reached the mansion of Terakh.

Strange though it be to relate, the servants of Terakh and of his son killed none in that onset. The followers of a new God did not usher in their new religion by the death of even one man. But the votaries of Hurki, struggling under a nameless delirium, slaughtered one another until exhaustion and night ended the unparalleled carnage.

Now, in the midst of this scene, Iskah felt a touch upon her garment, — a motion like the sleight of a sorcerer, and no more, — and when she looked, behold, the babe was gone from her arms.

A wild-eyed man was winding his way out of the retinue adroitly, like a sacred snake, and if any observed him, no man withstood him. A woman's cry of ecstasy from beyond, in the street, reached up to Iskah; for her ears and her heart were fine. "That poor mother hath found her babe," she said to Antelai. She did not mention the

matter to Abu-ramu. He had forgotten about the child.

In the early starlight a great caravan wound its unmolested flight from out the gate of Terakh, past the unguarded fortifications of Ur, into the gray sands.

"Blessed be the One God! He leadeth. I follow. Dost thou love me?" Thus whispered the chief; for he was but a lover, and the maiden clung to his bosom.

"As thou livest, let me live; when thou diest, I will die." So said Iskah gently.

The grand vizier and the general of the right aroused the king from his stupor.

"Arise, O king, and pursue them, and kill them, for their power is small, and their booty is great. Even Hurki, the shining one, commands it."

"Let them go," answered the king slowly. "I have seen a god greater than Hurki. He hath protected them. Pursue not, and let them go."

Far into the night, with the apprehensive look of flight, the caravan hurried on until the dawn. Seated upon one camel, Iskah and Abu-ramu mutely communed with the future. With hands welded together, with a touch that told their hidden thoughts, the prince and the princess passed their first night as in a sacred dream.

"Thy God shall be my God," whispered the Chaldean bride. "Thou mightier than Hurki,

thou hast snatched me as a panther doth his prey —O my lord!" Her voice thrilled with the pride that the weak feel in the strong.

"This day hath my God done mighty things in Ur. Whither he leadeth me, I know not. But this I know — I will obey him, and love thee, until my death."

"Hush!" said Iskah, her eyes roving over the horde. "For behold, Terakh approacheth."

They had been riding alone behind the tents and household goods. As the old man approached them a close observer would have noticed that his venerable face was much changed. A contest had passed over him that had left deep marks. Forced by fate into heresy which his courage never would have led him to champion, but of which he approved in the innermost vaults of his heart, his features had now that cast of decision which was needed to make his countenance strong.

A God whom he had seen to be mightier than the god he had made had taken him by the hand, and Terakh was astonished that he had offered his palm in return. But Terakh was an old man, and he was weak with much emotion.

"Now thou art the 'exalted father' of the people," said the aged man, bending humbly before his son. "Thy men inquire whether they shall offer sacrifice to Shamash or to Hurki."

"Tell them," said Abu-ramu without hesitation, in a tone of authority, "that they offer neither to the sun, nor to the moon, nor the stars, nor to any

graven images, but let them consume a sin-offering to the One God."

"His name?" inquired Terakh politely.

"He is called Ilu Shaddai, the God Almighty." Abu-ramu crossed his arms, and bent his head as he spoke. Awe covered his face like a mantle. Reverence settled upon it like a mist.

Moved as he had never been before, the old maker of gods, who knew his own images only too well, bowed and departed. "Verily," he thought, "my son loveth in might, he believeth in wisdom, he speaketh in mystery."

"Iskah! Beloved!" Abu-ramu's voice sounded as if it spoke from a soul far away. "I know not the new God yet. But I shall know him as the son knoweth the father. But this I know, that my soul cleaveth to thee with a love vaster than the heavens above, deeper than the earth beneath, and broader than the waters over the earth."

Iskah's glance rested for a moment upon her lover's eyes, and then quickly passed to the jeweled sky with a modest motion rare in that age to her sex and nation. She felt Abu's arm encircling her with an imperious insistence. It was as if he had forged around her neck the collar of a sweet servitude.

"Stranger than the power that brought us alive out of the ziggurat of Hurki, and out of the city of Ur, is thy great love for me, O Iskah," he murmured.

"Teach thou me the new God. I will worship

him. I find him very sweet." So said Iskah in a tired voice. Her head dropped upon his arm. She dreamed of a home with him. But his eyes sought the dark west. He was one of those who unite love and ambition into one emotion; he dreamed of founding a new nation by the help of a new God.

The dawn broke. Lifting up her hand to his lips, his eyes drew near and feasted upon her exquisite countenance. Her expression changed; as it did in the garden, from the priestess' to the woman's look, so now, with a sudden illumination, the woman's expression became that of the wife. Abu-ramu followed this beautiful transformation in rapture.

"My God," he cried out, "thou killest me with thy goodness!" Then he drew his wife toward him, and hid her in the folds of his mantle that his people might not see the meeting of their lips.

A book older than time, for it has proceeded out of the mouth of God, has told of the wanderings of these seekers after the true Ilu through Kharran, through Egypt, until they found rest in the land of the Canaanites. For in that book, Abu-ramu, the son of Terakh, the inhabitant of Ur, a prince of the Casidu, is known as Abraham, the father of the Jews; and Iskah his wife is called Sarai, the princess. And from their heresy, their courage, and their love

Sprang the race
That with Jehovah parleyed face to face.

ONLY AN INCIDENT.

A YOUNG man sauntered into the smoking-room of the Queen's Hotel in Edinburgh, and sat down by the window. It was five o'clock, and February of — let us call it about ten years ago. The coal fire in the open grate had at last succeeded in worrying the temperature of the large mahogany room up to a tolerable degree of comfort. At superficial sight, the young man would have been taken for a Scotchman, with his broad shoulders, his six-feet-one, and his ruddy beard; but the experienced eye would have decided otherwise upon observing the mobile lips, the nervous eyes, and the pale forehead, that bespoke a more highly organized nationality. As there are only two peoples that have added fire to the Scotch stolidity and canniness, he must have been an Australian or an American.

Anson Crocker was of New England blood, and a senior of Harvard University. He was considered to have much promise and little contemporary worth as a student. He had, however, by the modern gauge of compensation, made up an ample equivalent through taking high honors in the gymnasium. His specialty was the horizontal bar. But it broke with him one afternoon while he was doing the "giant swing" to the adoration of some

freshmen and their giggling cousins, and the possibility of a diploma became suddenly microscopic. After hovering between brain fever and permanent paralysis, he had recovered so far as to take his first trip abroad, with letters of introduction to distant Scottish relatives. The *Circassia* had come in only the day before, and Anson was waiting until he could walk straight and sleep in a steady bed before entering upon a round of Highland hospitality, such as a gay fellow does not forget when his graver years overtake him.

As he looked out of the window into the steady drizzle, he perceived the obvious difference between the old men of Edinburgh and of New York. Through the well-defined glare of the hotel lights a hundred gentlemen on the black side of sixty had passed by, always erect, handsome, able, well-preserved, and invariably braving the penetrating down-pour with their umbrellas tucked safe and dry under their arms. This phase of Edinburgh customs amused Anson considerably. In a semi-scientific spirit, natural to the dabbler in mineralogy and chemistry, he began to estimate the ratio of men who used their umbrellas for the purposes of protection, compared to those who did not, when he was interrupted in his calculations by two gentlemen stopping directly before his window. The rain now fell thicker and faster. A few merchants even quickened their paces and shook their heads cautiously, as if afraid of being observed in an impious act. The two who stopped were both

at least seventy, and they were gesticulating furiously with their umbrellas closed to the tightest fold. The water shone from their derbies and dripped from their coats. The altercation waxed until it threatened to be serious. It occurred to Anson Crocker to rush into the storm between them. But the foot-passengers passed the disputants by carelessly, as if it were no great matter if a heptagenarian chose to have his eyes pricked out. The squall passed; the disputants closed together, smuggled their watersheds under their arms, and in a most friendly manner walked on. A difference of opinion in Scotland looks more fatal than it really is. Anson laughed aloud at this tame ending to an aged "set-to." The athlete looked for a bit of a row, at least, and was disappointed. He sat down again, turned impulsively to a man in the seat next to him, and said: —

"Don't the people in Scotland use their umbrellas when it rains? What do they buy them for?"

The man shifted his chair a little toward his young interlocutor, as if he were grateful for the privilege of conversation, turned upon him a delicate face that would at once have struck a finer observer than Anson as superlatively sad, and answered in an accent Scottish enough, but modified by evident education: —

"This is nothing, sir. We don't call this rain. It 's only a slight mist. It 's foggy this evening, I notice."

Anson knew not whether to distrust his eyes or

his ears. He could hear the rain and he could see it. "The man is a professor," he thought; "perhaps he 's guying me."

But the man interested him. The first *bona fide* son of a foreign soil, no matter what or where he may be, generally has a fascination of his own to the traveler.

"If this is n't rain, will you kindly tell me what it is?" proceeded Anson turning around. He now obtained a full view of his new acquaintance. He was a middle-aged man with a rough, uncut beard, not unlike that worn by Carlyle, according to the pictures. This ornament might have been the freak of a genius, or the carelessness of poverty. The man's face was not regular or handsome; but the features had evidently been moulded by the influence of thought or study into a refinement that was exceedingly attractive. His cheeks were hollow, as if from midnight watches or from hunger. His eyes were dark and deep; they glowed with more than commonplace intelligence. "He *is* a prof.," said Anson to himself, "probably of the University here."

But when the natty Harvard student observed the man's dress, he began to doubt. Anson had been told that Scotchmen were famous for the peculiar care they gave to their clothes. A second glance revealed to him that this man was, to say the least, shabby. His overcoat of rough, cheap material was worn to threads about the collar and down the front; yet it was neat. The under coat

was a very shiny, over-sponged diagonal, and so closely buttoned at the throat that the absence of a shirt was too ostentatiously hidden. Anson's eyes involuntarily rested upon these details; he could not help it; there was such a marked contrast between the face and its setting. He then allowed his gaze to wander down to the stranger's shoes, — the problem was so interesting; but these, to his surprise, he found of superior make and material. This inspection occupied but a few seconds, yet the young man already felt ashamed of a curiosity which was indelicate enough to surprise this stranger of a secret, which all but beggars hope to conceal, — poverty.

The American raised his eyes and encountered a bleak look of reproach that he could never forget. With an obvious effort the man broke the pause, and with a singular grace of manner proceeded to answer Anson's light question. The cultivated modulations of this soft Scotch voice, so fascinatingly different from the strident noises that generally emanate from the New England throat, were sufficient in themselves to oust from Anson's easy memory his acute deductions.

"I see that you are a stranger, sir."

Anson nodded.

"Perhaps an American?".

"How did you know that?"

"It 's a trick of the voice you from over the water have. Now, sir, I don't doubt that you would call this rain in New York; but when it

rains with us, umbrellas are of no use — it pours right through. An umbrella with us is a more constant companion than a wife. A Scotchman carries it with him wherever he goes, irrespective of the weather, for he can never tell what it will do the next hour."

"Then I suppose," interrupted Anson with a roguish smile, "they are never used at all; this deluge is considered nothing. If it could possibly rain harder, it would pour through."

"I remember one time in Linlithgowshire, the day I discovered a new *Cyclophyllum*," said the Scotchman musingly. "Now, that *was* a wet day. It took me five hours to dig one specimen out without spoiling its delicate septa. I was working in a hollow. Before I knew it the water was up to my knees. It was either a new species or nothing. But I finally dug it out intact. By that time I was up to my waist, and just managed to wade out. That *was* a rain. I was taken advantage of, for I had no umbrella with me, what with my bag and tools."

The stranger laughed softly at the recollection of his exploit, and his eyes twinkled for a moment like two stars in a rift. Then they saddened quietly, and he sighed. At this sigh the young man glanced up keenly, and his eye happened to fall upon his companion's hands. Their backs were delicate from the knuckles to the wrist, but the fingers were rough and coarse from manual labor. "Probably from chipping rocks," thought Anson; then he added aloud: —

"I can appreciate your not giving in. You see, I've collected minerals for a good many years. You are a professor, are n't you?"

"No — I am not a professor," answered the man, shaking his head sadly, "although" —

"You look like one, anyway," said Anson cheeringly. "I'm a member of Harvard University and know slews of professors, and I took you for one."

At this careless speech, there came a hopeless, chilly look into the man's face. Anson did not notice it. He was now looking at the increasing gusts of rain, and congratulating himself on not having to dine out in such weather. He had experienced eight days of it on the trip over, and speculated idly on how long it could hold out. With an effort his chance acquaintance recovered himself. He perceived quickly that he was passing out of the American's mood. Had Anson been a man used to observing the sufferings of others, he would have been pierced to the heart by the expression of the Scotchman's face. He turned lazily from the window, and began to speak again in his easy, pleasant way: —

"Have you collected minerals? Is there anything of interest to be had near Edinburgh? I mean to run down to your famous Cornwall mines. I wish to get some fine cassiterite and fluor."

Anson was really an enthusiastic collector, but his knowledge of anything but the physical features of the minerals and their localities was exceedingly superficial.

"My department is narrow," said the Scotchman quickly. "I only collect fossils, and of these only corals. I have one or two scarce specimens in my cabinet. If you would care to come and see them, you would confer on me a favor, and perhaps experience a slight interest yourself."

Anson fancied that the man looked eagerly at him, as if hoping for his acceptance.

"I should like above all things to come if you will let me," replied the young man heartily. "I don't know anything about fossil corals, though. Here 's my card. I 'm staying here for about a month. When would it be convenient for me to call?"

At this ready response to his timid hint, the stranger's face turned radiant. He took the pasteboard, glanced at it, and put it carefully into his pocket.

"I have no card, Mr. Crocker," — with a courteous bow; "but" — a slight flush of embarrassment mounted to his forehead. He drew a bundle of letters from his pocket and, taking one out of its envelope, he handed the envelope to the young man. "I am not a professor myself, but this is from the professor of palæontology at the University of Oxford. He is a correspondent of mine."

He paused, while Anson, with a decided advance in respect for what was previously an unknown quantity, read the name and address. As the Scotchman spoke, he rose from his seat and stood in an attitude in which, for a brief moment, pride

dominated his usual expression of hopelessness. He was a tall, thin man, lean as a spendthrift's purse. As he stood in the light of the room his clothes seemed pitiably thin. Which were more worn, they or he? A waiter in the garb of his profession now entered, cast a disdainful glance at the correspondent of an Oxford professor, and obsequiously announced to the rich American that dinner was served. Without, the rain had burst down with renewed vitality. Anson noticed that the man had no umbrella, and he protested cordially: —

"You can't think of going out in this weather with no protection? Take mine, Mr." — glancing at the envelope — "Mr. Mentieth."

Before Anson could call a boy, his gaunt acquaintance shook his head, putting both hands gently on the young man's arm. In the full light, his face, especially the upper part of it where the forehead meets the corners of the eyes and cheeks, had a heroic cast. As he answered, there came a wistfulness into his voice and mouth that touched Anson more deeply than he liked. Was it the need of food or sympathy?

"By no means, Mr. Crocker. It is nothing. I am used to it. I can change about when I get home. And you will come, will you not? It is n't very pleasant where I live. You had better take a cab, sir, for the street is ill lighted. I am always home in the evening."

He buttoned his coat tightly to his throat. The

coat seemed to Anson stretched like a skin across its wearer's back. He stooped a little when he reached the corridor, dropped his eyes uneasily before the clerk, hastened to the front door, shivered on the sill, and then made the leap into the storm. Anson watched the man to the corner, pitching unsteadily in the wind, and beaten by the rain. Thoughts that were new to the luxurious invalid stirred within him. He could not formulate them. He was dimly conscious of but one thing, namely, that he was a brute not to have asked his enigma to stay to dinner.

Anson Crocker stood before his mirror in the Queen's Hotel, putting the finishing touches to his evening dress. Like so many Americans before him, immediately upon his arrival he had hunted up the best tailor in the city, and had ordered clothes enough to last him three years. He looked upon this as a method of paying for his trip. It was a subtle stroke of economy not appreciated by the parental understanding. The dress-suit had just come that day, and he surveyed himself critically before the glass.

"By Jove!" he ejaculated after two twists and a turn, "it 's fine stuff, but a beastly poor fit about the shoulders."

He surveyed the creases darkly for a moment, and then brightened up.

"I guess it will have to go. It is n't any worse than the natives wear, — that 's one comfort." Nor was it.

Anson had starred it in Edinburgh to his heart's satisfaction. His distant relatives proved of unexceptionable blood, and wealthy enough. Moreover, they took cordially to this representative of Western civilization, and were delighted that he had distinguished manners, and showed no trace of Mohawk blood. The absence of feathers and war-paint puzzled them for a space, but they were becoming used to it. American travelers, at the time of which we write, had not been so frequently entertained in the homes of Scotland as they have been since. Anson had been invited to a real castle with a wall of stone ten feet thick, a monk's chamber, a secret staircase, a rookery, and a ghost. He had attended a "meet," and had followed the hounds creditably, in spite of his broken back; he had met a marquis, and numberless viscounts and baronesses. He had been regularly lionized, for handsome foreigners were scarce in February. He had met the prettiest girl in the world, the sister of an M. P. What more was there needed to make a very young man perfectly happy?

But this happened to be a night off. By some slip, he was to dine at the hotel alone, and he felt considerably bored. Time could but hang heavily on his hands till nine, when he was due at the club. He emptied the pockets of three or four old coats, to see if there were any letters which he had failed to answer. He sat down to his table, lighted a cigarette, and sorted over a small pack. A crumpled envelope fell out and stared at him. Anson

threw it on the floor without looking at it, and then, thinking that it might contain something valuable, stooped and picked it up.

"Mr. James Mentieth, Mary's Court, Edinburgh,"—he read slowly. The number of a house was added. "Who the dickens is that?" he asked of himself; then, after a puff or two, "By Jove, it 's that old chap with the collection of corals."

He tipped back in his chair, and through the curls of smoke began to recall his first Scotch acquaintance. Anson had entirely forgotten him. What are the claims of an obscure old scholar to those of society? He got up and walked about the room, and consulted his watch.

"I will go and call on the old fellow. He seemed considerably cut up. It will please him, I 'll wager half a crown."

Anson skipped two courses of his dinner, to the disapproval of his grim waiter, and hurried through the remainder in an American fashion, very different from the languid dignity which he had already acquired.

"You may take me to Mary's Court," he ordered his driver curtly, ten minutes after.

"Where, *sorr?*" The man touched his hat, and appeared to doubt his senses.

Anson took out the envelope, read the address peremptorily aloud, and got in. The driver shook his head and muttered to himself.

The cab whirled Anson far away from his Edinburgh; away from the city of fashion; away from

broad streets, granite shops, luxurious hotels, and beautiful homes. The lights became dimmer, the streets tortuous, narrower, and darker, the houses lower and sad. There was an interminable winding in and out, a rush up a black alley, and the cab came to a sudden halt like a surprised curse.

"Hullo!" cried Anson, poking his head out of the window, "what's this? What are you stopping here for?" He had a vague suspicion of foul play. It was a wicked-looking spot. But he was quickly convinced that this was the place he sought. His common sense, or at least his commonplace sense, urged him to return immediately. This forbidding court was enough to make him distrust any stranger; but a voice within bade him seek the adventure to its end. When he stood in the mud and saw the cab rattling off, he felt a cold shiver stealing over him such as precedes an act of daring or of chivalrous folly.

A little ragged girl sat upon the step before him, rocking to and fro. Anson noticed her bare feet and a ragged bit of woolen fringe over her head. She must have been very cold. He made a troubled inquiry of the child concerning the whereabouts of this Mentieth. He glanced as he spoke into the open door, and saw a black, bare hallway. There were no lights visible in the building, only a glimmer from the top story. The little girl made an upward motion with her head, and moved along as if to let him pass.

"Here 's sixpence. Now show me his rooms and it is yours."

This the child understood. Her eyes rolled at the sight of this inconceivable wealth. She uttered her first plaintive note.

"She 's at it. Dinna ye hear?"

"Who?"

"*She.* You 'll see. Coom!" With an odd, instinctive motion she took his gloved hand in her cold fingers and silently led him up the three flights of unsafe stairs.

"What does Mr. Mentieth do, little one?" Anson asked on the way. He felt bound to see the thing through.

"Got a shop." The child evidently thought this explanation enough, and very lucid at that. The little girl pattered along noiselessly, but Anson purposely tramped with all his might. The noise, reëchoing moodily in this desolate shell, kept his spirits up. Before the child could lead him to the door he sought, it opened, and the face of his hotel acquaintance looked out from it with a startled expression. The man recognized the child first.

"Ah, Meg," he said drearily, "that you? Better not come in just now. We are not very happy here to-night."

"Here 's a mon fur saxpunce. Gimme!" said the mite. She had a chariness of words, as if she were accustomed to be beaten for every effort at articulation.

Anson slipped the silver piece into her clinging

fingers, and advanced towards the man at the door, clearly revealing himself before he said: —

"I have come to see your corals, Mr. Mentieth."

The scientist stared at him pathetically. For the instant, he seemed more frightened than pleased. He recovered himself with tremulous pleasure.

"This is — this is kind indeed, sir. I thought you had forgotten me. I am sorry the stairs are so dark. I kept them lighted for you for seven nights. I had given you up. Come in, sir. Come right in."

Anson Crocker bowed rather stiffly and walked in. As he did so, an inner door shut with a slam, and he thought he heard muffled moans and a suppressed exclamation. Decidedly an uncanny atmosphere! Should he turn around and rush downstairs? He might have done so without a word of apology, had not the imploring eyes of his sad host compelled him to the spot.

Anson was not a sensitive, imaginative youth. His muscles were too highly developed. He was luxurious and easy-going and careless; even his own accident had not sobered him. Now, for the first time in his career, he felt that tragedies are not a monopoly of the stage, and that before him one of the most hopeless was enacting. A woman, however encrusted her heart, would have read Mr. Mentieth's history from a glance at this room. With Anson, it was the first successful effort at intuition.

The room was about fifteen feet square; it had one window and three doors; one led to the hall, the second to an inner chamber, and the third to a dark closet at the right. Anson was too well bred to have betrayed curiosity or surprise at the interior of the Marquis of Bute's island palace; but, entrapped from his guard, he could not help looking about him in this dim place. This was made the more easy, for his host did not speak to him, but, with contracted, questioning eyes hungrily watched Anson's changing expressions, as if waiting for the verdict.

The first thing that smote the gay American was the terrible contrast between his own rich, almost foppish costume and that of the man before him. He felt quietly conscious of his fur-trimmed overcoat; of the diamond, gleaming from the embroidered bosom of his shining shirt; of his patent leather shoes; his crush hat, held lightly in a hand protected by spotless kids; and of his silver-headed silk umbrella. It was the insolence of wealth flaunting itself in the teeth of desperate poverty.

The correspondent of an Oxford professor wore a leather apron, which was attached by straps over his shoulders and which reached to his ankles. Only a rough, gray undershirt was beneath it. His arms were bare. His trousers were patched at the knees and neatly darned at the foot. A pair of rough woolen stockings completed his scanty outfit. The leathern apron furnished the

grim hint, and the corner behind the entry door completed it. Here stood a low stool and a low work-bench filled with shoemaker's tools. Beside the bench were lasts, and under it a tub of black water, out of which a ragged angle of leather peered with a hard look, as if refusing to be softened. Mr. Menteith — this gentleman, this learned man, the correspondent of the palæontological professor at Oxford University — was a cobbler.

But the aspect of the room was another matter. Oxford University might have well been proud of it. The poor place was, in short, a magnificent museum. With the exception of the unhappy corner, the window, and the doors, the entire space was dedicated to the occupant's scientific specialty. Cabinets lined the walls, rising to the ceiling. Behind spotless glass doors rows upon rows and pyramidal tiers upon tiers of fossils appeared, methodically arranged; while the whole centre of the apartment was taken up by one large glass case, within which were exhibited fossil slides. These were exquisitely mounted, each in front of its looking-glass, and with all the latest appliances for showing off these delicate wonders. Anson was quick to note the absence of carpet, of dust, of everything that could detract from the perfection and dignity of such a noble collection. And there, between him and a tall, stately cabinet, whose reflective glass was a shimmering background, whose stained pine was an outline frame, stood this rude trunk with its grand, patient head, look-

ing like a terrible cameo, engraven by a divine hand to represent the torturing marriage of brains and penury.

The room, by reason of its one necessary blot, exhaled the musty odor of tanned hide unearthed from the lower carboniferous formation. Anson's hand was upon the broad case in the middle of the room. After this inspection, he instinctively dropped his eyes before the burning gaze of his host. He was embarrassed, as if caught in an indiscretion. The little mirrors each flung back its specimen at him, and danced merrily in the flicker of the one dim light. A prince of curators might have classified and catalogued them. Their great value was evident even to the undergraduate's light eye. The corals seemed to show a certain respect for their surroundings. Their scant duty was performed when they had flashed their own little reflections, "each after its kind." This service was rendered as graciously in this garret as it might have been in the great British Museum.

"What do you think of it, Mr. Crocker?"

The collector had noted the different expressions of surprise and astonishment fleeting over the young man's face. He noticed also that the New Englander had none of the insular contempt for struggle and poverty, such as he had fought against all his life. Anson's long look of boyish admiration seemed to touch the lonely cobbler at his depth; and it was sweet to him to hear the enthusiastic word he craved — who could have said how much?

"It is wonderful, Mr. Menteith! It is superb! It's a stunner! How on earth did you do it? Why are *you* doing this?"

He pointed at the bench. The last question was not an impertinence. It was a compliment; and so the shoemaker took it.

"Take off your coat, sir, and I'll tell you. Lay it on the case. Take the lamp and look about. Excuse me for a minute. You'll stay a bit, will you not, sir?"

Anson assented gracefully, though waiving the point of the overcoat. He found the room cold; it occurred to him to wonder whether its tenants were quite comfortable. He took the flickering lamp; it cast restless shadows on these ghostly cabinets. Had they been stolen by a maniac from some museum? They were as much out of place in that room as an escritoire by Boule. Anson was devoured by curiosity. Here was an adventure! Was this scientific cobbler in political disguise? Or was he a philosopher in voluntary seclusion and poverty? Or the unhappy offspring of a noble house, sacrificed or sacrificing himself for a name? He looked noble enough; he had the unmistakable air of one who would yield liberty or life itself to that all-comprehensive sentiment which men are pleased to include in the word "honor."

Anson, while left to himself, examined the collection with a pseudo-scientific eye. He could roughly appreciate its importance, but not its value, nor the extent of patience and labor which

it represented. These hundreds of fossilized specimens were the mute appeal of the weakest, the most persistent, the most significant creatures in the economy of nature. This polyp is god-like, for it is a creator. Choose between man and the zoöphyte! Which is the eternal architect? Not Nebuchadnezzar, the Pharaohs, Pericles, Augustus, nor Michael Angelo, but the microscopic life that deposits the calcareous coral. Kings have built cities and tombs and temples, but the coral has raised islands and created continents, which nourish man and will outlast his mightiest works. There is no more enticing, no more delicate field of research in the broad realm of fossil remains than the microscopic study of corals.

Anson glowed over these treasures with the enthusiasm of an amateur collector. In his junior year he had understood Darwin's theory of barrier reefs, and had approved of it, as a junior might. He had seen in Bermuda evidences of the zoöphyte's tremendous push and perseverance, and had learned to respect creatures that were responsible for so fascinating a winter resort, and whose innumerable sarcophagi furnished the sawn blocks to build the hotel in which he lived. But his complacent college learning was staggered before labels solemnly ensconced beside five-fingered specimens bearing the lucid inscription: *Campophyllum paracida*, and so on, row upon row.

The young man's scientific investigations were suddenly diverted by strange sounds. Harsh, gut-

tural noises were interrupted by a soft, pleading feminine voice: —

"Don't, mother! There, there; that's a dear. Now sit down here while father goes into the other room."

Anson put the lamp down on the glass case and listened. He felt uncomfortable. Silence reassured him a little, and Mr. Mentieth came out, dressed as he first appeared at the Queen's Hotel. The man bore a haggard, hopeless look. His deep-set eyes had the dullness which indicates the endurance of all but unbearable anguish. Anson had experienced so many new emotions during the last quarter of an hour that he had hardly another left to spend on the sight of such irremediable sadness. The man came in stooping. For some reason he had evidently come almost to the end of his self-control. His expression of irresistance was heart-breaking. He sat down on the bench, and motioned Anson to take the three-legged stool beside him. His lips were tightly bitten together as if he would groan if they were unlocked. He put his two hands over his face and bent to his knees. Anson did not know what to say. He was not used to considering the discomfort of other people. Plainly, here was no effort at acting. The man did not want pounds or pence; he craved sympathy. The convict in solitary confinement would gladly barter a ten years' lease of life for an hour in which to unbosom his misery to a heart of flesh. The collector of corals had been singularly

attracted to this young American, as broken age and disappointment are attracted to youth and careless hope. Anson was natural; he was no snob, and his expression was cheerful and kind. The shoemaker had not invited a guest to his miserable home for two years. This evening was an epoch in his existence; it was an odd incident in Anson's European tour.

"I wish I could help you, sir," faltered Anson with a blush. He felt immediately sorry that he had made such a boyish remark. Nothing more mature occurred to him. The Scotchman started up with a sudden motion, and took the lamp in his hand, and looked at his guest piercingly.

"Come, sir, let me show you my collection. It will do me good. You will see many rare and some unique specimens. I have collected every one myself. It is not boasting to say that this is the best private collection of corals in Great Britain. Even the British Museum cannot show such a collection from the carboniferous system of Scotland."

He bustled from case to case, flushed and excited.

"Just look at this *Clisiophyllum*, sir. This is one of my discoveries, sir. I have named it after the eminent palæontologist, McCoy. This is the *Mc Coyianum*. Here is its section. Notice these dense, interlamillar dissepiments; that is its characterization. What a delicate, wonderful product of God's genius! Look at its numerous septal system through the microscope. It is almost allied to the *Bipartitum*, but not quite. A small, impal-

pable divergence from the typical lines makes all the difference in the world. Do you think it strange, sir, for an Honorary Member of the Royal Ducal Society of Jena to be cobbling shoes? It is no boast, you will pardon me if I say it, but there is not a man in the United Kingdom who is such an authority on corals, sir, as I am; and this is recognized, too. That is the terrible bitterness of it. See here!" dragging Anson up to another tall cabinet. "This is my life-work, sir. I may die in this garret, but my name cannot be forgotten. Look at them! Here is a new family of Rugose Corals, sir. I discovered this family and described it in a publication which I shall take pleasure in giving you, if you think it is worthy. This is my family. It bears the name I gave it. A much valued friend suggested it to me, — '*Diplocyathophyllidæ*.'"

The enthusiast waited for a moment to let this hundred-ton name sink into Anson's soul. The young man looked as intelligent as he could, and nodded as if he had met an old acquaintance. It might have been a slight wandering glance, or an imperceptible shrug indicative of a shrinking from a hobby ahead, that made the sensitive coralist stop in the middle of his eager description. Perhaps it was the absurdity of firing such names at his fashionable caller that made him utter a deep sigh and turn around.

"Ah," he said, "of course you are not interested? Come away from this. If you don't mind

taking this old chair, let us sit down. I will fetch — Martha! — she will get a jug of ale from around the corner, and I have some crackers and cheese; then let us talk. It will benefit me, if you don't mind, sir?"

With the instinct of hospitality so strong in the Scotch nature, this host would have spent his last penny for his guest's entertainment. But Anson, now a little tutored in the makeshifts of misery, divined through the feverish eagerness of the request that even a sixpence was more than the poor man owned that night. He put the suggestion easily by, adding that the next time he called they should have the proper feast. As it was, his host insisted on crackers and cheese. He brought them in a spotless crockery plate, and Anson noticed that while the man talked he ate in an absent-minded way, as if he were hungry. Anson sat on the three-legged stool with his back to the table and the lamp, while the shoemaker sat on his bench before him, the light shining full in his grand, haggard face. Anson was profoundly puzzled. The contrast of that bench, the tools, the dreary toil with the daring intelligence, the broad forehead, and such eyes beneath it, perplexed as much as it moved him; nay, more, for Anson was a butterfly. His face must have betrayed his thoughts plainly. The Scotchman hastened to speak.

"It may strike you strangely, sir, but I was born to this bench. It was my father's. He was

a shoemaker. I am not ashamed of that; nor is Martha, my daughter, sir. Twenty years ago we lived in Beith, — that 's in Ayrshire, sir. We were happy then, and I cared for nothing but my trade. One day there came a Londoner, a barrister, on a vacation, into my shop, and he waited while I was putting a patch on one of his boots. Among other things he asked me — he had a careless way with him — if I ever saw any fossils about, and if I had been to the Langside Quarry. What did I know about fossils then? And he laughed at me good-naturedly, and showed me a specimen he had found, and told me if I could get any number of them he would send for them and pay me well. He gave me the name of a book on corals, and he seemed amused at the cobbler's enthusiasm. Martha calls that one — see? — the Governor of my collection. The Londoner gave it to me. After I had studied for ten years from all the books I could buy, I found that it was a new species; — so I named it *Concentricum;* that was my revenge on the laughing barrister. So the fever got me, and so I studied — all my odd time. My God, sir! it is a terrible thing for a man in my station in life to dare to wedge his way among universities and professors and to try to understand even the tiniest of God's secrets. It brings a thimbleful of comfort, and a homeful of misery. And so I began to collect, whenever I could lay by a penny or two to tramp about. I collected in all parts of Scotland. A few years ago we came to

Edinburgh. I thought I could find more work and be nearer the libraries at the same time. That was the day troubles began with us, sir."

He stopped, as if hesitating whether to confide further. Anson was oppressed by the moment of silence. He saw his companion's face twitching. He remembered the word of the little waif that piloted him to the door. He thought of the mysterious sounds from the inner room. He felt that he had to say something.

"Pardon me, is it your wife?" The Scotchman nodded faintly.

"Eh — is — eh — she — eh —" Anson faltered, lest he should have committed the unpardonable sin of a false interpretation. The man looked up, and Anson in despair tapped his forehead significantly with his finger. A groan answered him.

"Five years she has been out of her head, sir. Only Martha can manage or comfort her. She obeys Martha, and has forgotten me. We used to be happy, sir. Why should the good God do such things?"

"How did it happen?" inquired Anson, feeling that it would be brutal not to interest himself in this tragedy.

"I cannot tell. The first I knew of it, I came home and found her throwing my specimens into the court. She said they were thieves and took away her bread. Ah, I could stand it better if she did n't strike at my life's blood. For my corals are my life, sir, and I 'm afraid to go from home

lest I find them destroyed, and the work of years undone. Now and then I despair. I crave companionship. I hunger and thirst for the intelligent world, and I go out and sit in the hotels watching people and sometimes hazarding a little conversation. It was thus that you did me good. We have watched my wife, Martha and I, for five years. She has never been alone. Do you think a man would send his wife to an asylum? Not if he loved her, sir."

The poor man brushed a hot tear from his cheek. He did not mention for how many years he had slept on the floor at the door of that closed room, that he might protect his wife and his corals at the same time.

"I should n't have told you this, sir. I have no friends. I live alone."

"But the professor at Oxford, is he not your friend?" demanded Anson thoughtlessly.

"These, sir, are paper friends. I could show you letters from Huxley and Tyndall and Darwin and Geikie: these and many more are my good friends by correspondence. Do you think one of them would call a cobbler his friend?"

"Why, yes!" cried Anson in a burst of genuine feeling; "I do, certainly I do."

The other shook his head skeptically.

"Not one of them knows that I mend shoes for a living. I meet these at the rooms of the Philosophical Society, of which I am a member — here in Edinburgh. They don't know of my poverty or

my misery. You, sir, are the first that has stepped foot in my room for two years. I have been so poor, and she so — as she is, sir. Good God, sir! and this cabinet is worth two thousand pounds, and I less than sixpence, unless I finish these boots to-night!"

He got up and paced the room in great emotion. It was pitiful to witness these struggles of a high order of intelligence against the roughest throws of fate. Anson felt a dramatic fascination in the sight. The contrast of pathetic learning and pitiable ignorance and deprivation was overwhelming to one to whom the value of an education had been proportionate to his ability of cashing his father's checks. The gentle language spoken by the miserable man told what years of culture in his specialty had done for him. The loneliness, the terrible battle for supremacy in one department of human knowledge, the narrow selection, and the rigid adherence to his choice: these, united with the stubborn pride of the middle class, and the determination to avenge his lowly birth by compelling the respect of the great scientists, were sufficient to lend the accent of education to his voice, to expand his forehead, refine his mouth, give the lustre of power to his eyes, and dignity to his carriage; while the sublime self-sacrifice involved in his domestic tragedy had lifted an otherwise rude countenance into moral grandeur.

Not long ago there died a cutter of tombstones whose leisure life was spent in the gathering of one

of the finest private collections of butterflies in the world. But he had three dollars a day and no skeleton at home. This James Mentieth, in spite of those tremendous odds, had discovered no less than two hundred unnamed varieties of corals, and even a whole new family. This was in itself a title to recognition. It had won him "paper friends" corresponding disciples by the score, honorary memberships to many a foreign scientific society, and that *kúdos* which satisfies vain minds, but no sympathy. What is there impossible for a man to do if he but concentrate his existence into that resistless form of energy described by the term "will"?

Anson pondered this problem of effort versus condition as his eyes followed the motions of his host.

"Why don't you sell your collection, and get out of your troubles that way?"

The young man was disturbed at the result of his practical inquiry, as soon as it was made. The collector turned upon him with quivering lip: —

"*Sell?* Sell my *specimens?* What should I do if they took my corals and did not take me too?"

"But why don't you become a professor of corals somewhere and take them along. There must be plenty of such chances." Anson was now cutting unawares to the quick.

"Not with us, sir. I am not well connected. I am only a shoemaker. People would not forget that in England. I have no influence, only the lit-

tle knowledge I have acquired. Now it is different in America. All men are equal, I understand, there. If I could only get to the other side" — he faltered. Anson felt that the man had uttered the secret desire of his soul in that last wail.

"Oh, perhaps I can help you in that," interrupted the youth with his enthusiastic, careless exuberance, and also with a slight air of patronage. "My uncle endowed the geological cabinet at Harvard. He gave them a hundred thousand dollars. I guess they would do anything I asked them to. They could easily buy your collection and appoint you professor of it, or curator. I 'll speak to them about it when I go home."

Just as an aspen, pushing its head upward for many a waiting year in a shady hollow, meets at last the sun and trembles toward it — so the struggling, quivering man bent toward and clutched at the good-natured suggestion of this sunny young lord.

"You don't mean it, sir? America is such a rich, such a generous country! It appreciates learning and is not ashamed of honest poverty. My good wife might recover in America? Do you think, sir, that your land, your university, would consent to receive *me?*"

Anson was a little frightened at the hope he had so thoughtlessly raised in this despairing life. He made a movement as if to speak, but said nothing.

"Martha," cried the collector eagerly, "Martha, Martha! come here!"

The door opened and a tall woman appeared. She was freckled and red-haired and ugly, but her eyes had that curious steadiness, her manner that authoritative calmness which characterize eminent alienists.

"Well, father?"

"Come in, Martha. This is an American gentleman, come to see us. He takes a great interest in our collection, Martha. This is my daughter, Mr. Crocker. Mr. Crocker is an undergraduate of the great Harvard University in America. His uncle is a very rich man, and he will have the university buy my corals, and they will take me too. Thank him, Martha! It is very kind of him to take so much trouble for strangers."

The young woman advanced with a stately step to Anson, and gave him a warm, firm hand. She then cast a troubled look at her father, and put her hand upon his arm. Anson felt strangely when she touched his hand. It seemed to him as if a giant had stroked him and bade him be still. He tried to speak, but, not for the first time that evening, found that he had n't a word to say.

"Mr. Crocker thinks very highly of my collection, Martha," proceeded the palæontologist excitedly. "There is nothing like it in the great Harvard University, he says. America is a noble country, Martha. This is the first American she has seen, sir."

Anson was not a little embarrassed at the old man's words. He began to see that he had con-

jured hopes which he might not be able to gratify. He inwardly cursed his boastful suggestion, or careless promise. What had he said? These poor people were too terribly in earnest to take his colloquial varnish as he had meant it. This was not society. It was life.

"Let us show Mr. Crocker my publications." The collector rose feverishly. "He shall have some copies to send to his university. Here are two papers read before the Philosophical Society." He handed two fat, gray pamphlets to his disturbed guest.

"Martha, show him the plates. Look, sir, these were engraved by me."

Anson could not credit his ears at this preposterous statement. He looked up quickly at the strong eyes of the young woman beside him. These were serious, masterful, compelling belief. He looked at the lower left-hand corner of the page before him. Truly, there it was, printed in smallest type: "Jas. Mentieth, Del." Above this patent of the cobbler's truthfulness were the most marvelous results of the engraver's needle which the American had ever seen. He glanced at his host gently. His eyes apologized for a moment's distrust. He was lost in wonder. A penniless shoemaker, interrupted at his bench, one of the greatest authorities on corals? That was incredible enough, but to find the same brown hand that cobbled old shoes producing engravings like these — it was a miracle. Anson brushed his hand over his forehead. He

felt as if he were intoxicated. The room with its dark cases and little spots of mirrors seemed to dance about him.

"Yes, sir, that is my work, all of it, except what Martha does. Her hand is steadier than mine. I am a hard-working man. I am growing old. Perhaps you would be interested, sir," continued the shoemaker, drawing close and pointing to one of the plates. "This has taken me fifteen years to do, sir. The process is a discovery I made. It is a secret. Only Martha knows. It is a process of photo-engravure. There was nothing microscopic enough before to represent the sections of my new corals. So I made up my mind to do it myself. I have done it, sir. Here is a fineness never before attained. Why, I could engrave your portrait, if I were that kind of an artist, in half an hour, to an eyelash."

Anson did not think this boast immodest, and received it with silent respect.

"But the process is very expensive, sir. I sell duplicate specimens, and have been able from time to time to buy plates and acids and tools. Get Mr. Crocker my last plate from the closet, Martha, my dear."

The woman put a large copper plate into Anson's hands, and then held the light over it. Anson could hardly contain an exclamation of admiration. There was only one small completed engraving upon the plate. It represented a transverse section of what Mr. Mentieth was pleased to

call a *Microphyllum*, discovered by himself. The lines, the cells, the structural details, the most intricate parts of that microscopic anatomy, were cut with faithful fineness and delicacy. With the naked eye Anson could not detect most of the strokes. They seemed to be the work of an intelligent spider rather than of a man, so filmy, so impalpable were the infinitesimal outlines of the imperceptible molecular structure in this deft engraving.

"It is wonderful, marvelous!" cried Anson, seizing the engraver's hand. "Why don't you make a fortune with this process?"

He was interrupted by the familiar deprecatory gesture. The cobbler's hand was laid upon his arm. Martha's eyes pleaded with him.

"You forget, Mr. Crocker, I could engrave nothing but corals."

"You might as well say you have achieved nothing but glory!" cried Anson.

Martha laid her face against her father's shoulder, and kissed his coat. She nodded gravely to her elegant guest. Her father put his arm about her. His eyes looked into her face and drank inspiration. They blazed back at Anson in pardonable exultation. He felt himself every inch a man, worthy of honor from the greatest of American universities. Yet it was not hard to see that the daughter was the strength of the two.

As Mr. Mentieth was opening his lips to reply, the door of the inner room was flung open, and the

maniac walked slowly into the museum. It was the mother — the wife. She looked about the group, then centred her stern eyes upon her husband, stretched out her hand, and pointed her finger at him. Her chin and forehead retreated; of hair she had none. Anson hastily took up his hat and umbrella from the glass case, and made ready to leave the room.

The poor man shriveled under his wife's look, and trembled before her pitiless finger. Martha took a calm step toward her mother.

"Jamie!" began the woman in an expressionless voice. "Jamie, gang to yer bench an' finish them butes. Did ye think them stones would feed ye? They will rise up and curse ye, Jamie, as I do. Them corals are thieves. They steal yer brains and yer vittles. Go to yer bench!" The wretched woman pointed to the bench in the corner. Drops stood out upon the husband's face. He appealed mutely to his daughter. Anson grew cold, and edged to the door, to escape witnessing the poor man's shame. But Martha went up to her mother, and drew her into the inner room.

"Not now, mother dear!" she soothed the lunatic; "there is a stranger here, — a gentleman, who came to help father. Father will finish his work when the stranger is gone."

She shut the door gently. Dull grumbling and cursing sounded from behind it. She came back, and kissed her father again, and then she turned with dignity to the guest.

"You will not disappoint my father, will you, sir?" she said in a low voice. Anson even fancied he detected a tone of rebuke in it. Before he could reply, she had gone.

"Must you go, sir?" pleaded the palæontologist, as he saw Anson bowing at the door. Tears were streaming down the Scotchman's face. "You will pardon this, sir, will you not? Martha should not have left her. I am afraid you will not come again. You have seen my misery, sir. I feel that you will respect it."

Anson wrung his host's hand silently.

"I will light you down. You will not forget what you spoke about, sir. When do you think you can hear from Harvard University? We shall be very eager, my daughter and I."

"Oh, in about a month, I should say," answered Anson near the bottom of the stairs.

"You have my pamphlets, sir. I should like to call on you. You must drop me a line before you come again, that I may receive you properly. Ah, sir, if we should go to America, how could I repay you? I think that God has sent you to me at my darkest hour."

Anson tried to answer. What was it that smote him dumb? Such a trust as this was enough to suffocate a man!

"I say," piped a thin voice at the corner of the court, "when will ye be coomin back, me lud?"

It was the little girl to whom he had given the sixpence. She dogged him for a short distance,

like his half-developed conscience, — then fell back.

. . . . . .

Four weeks after, the shoemaker sat in his garret looking dreamily at one of his Rugose family.

"Have n't ye seen him *to-day*, father?"

Martha his daughter asked the question cheerfully. She had given up hope herself; but he should not know that. The collector shook his head.

"They said he had gone to the Highlands on a visit, and would be back some time. The answer from his letter is due from America soon."

"Is n't he but a young mon to have so much power — to do the thing you 've set your heart on?" suggested Martha with evasive caution.

"Should he deceive a poor man?" cried the cobbler piteously. "He was a gentleman, Martha, and a gentleman keeps his word. Watch for the postman, girl, whenever I am out! It might come at any time. It may come to-day. I am sorry I have n't heard from him since he was here. It seems a long while. Perhaps he was displeased with us about something. Or, maybe, Martha, the young man means to surprise us with his kindness. But we shall hear. I am not afraid, Martha. He is an American gentleman. He will keep his word."

. . . . . .

Another three weeks and a month went by. Anson was very busy, and luxurious homes were

very hospitable, and he was having too good a time to think of miserable strangers.

On the steamer, coming home, for the first time he began to think seriously of his promise to the collector. There was a pretty widow on board, the daughter of a great senator. Anson thought himself in love with her — for the time; and, under the smoke-stack, he told her the story, and asked her coöperation in aiding the shoemaker. But she laughed merrily at the boy's innocence and enthusiasm. If he had traveled in Europe as much as she, he would not have been so easily taken in, she told him. Then she dismissed with a light shrug his improbable story, and began to chat about the new casino at Lenox, until Anson really felt ashamed of his unworldliness.

But the young man did not brutally forget his promise. Upon his arrival at college, he called upon the president the first thing, and began to tell his story; but before he was fairly under way, a tremulous freshman was ushered in — and a trustee followed, — and Anson retired, the president bowing him and the fate of a family out.

Then came the excitement of football, training for athletics, "boning" for rank, until — like the narrowing perspective of the railroad track from the rear of the train — the palæontological cobbler insensibly became but a line — a spot — a blank, in Anson's hurrying memory.

A CAST OF THE NET.

It was Saturday morning, and the head of Dock Street was black with fishermen. It was in the heat of August. As the farms that are advertised for sale invariably have a "never-failing spring," so Springharbor has a never-failing cool breeze. On the morning of which we write the gentle wind blew from the south, and from the steamboat landing up Dock Street into "Lumper's Offices," where one can procure a cook, a calker, or a scrubber; and into junk stores, where you can fit yourself out for a trip to the Grand Banks. The south wind even forced its way into too many saloons, where it did its best to purify the stagnant odors of stale liquor, and then staggered on until it stopped at the post-office and gasped.

By ones and pairs men of a peculiar stamp came up the street with the southerly breeze, and at the junction of Dock with Main Street brought up into the wind, like sloops swinging to anchor. Many of these were young men, and had a reckless look. Some were men of middle life; these had a determined look. A few were past the prime, and had an anxious look. The young men immediately had their boots blacked by small boys; this act of deference to polite society was the second requisite

after a trip. The older sailors discussed the weather, the prospects, the latest seizure on the Canadian limit, and the price of fish, in an undertone, or did their best to cajole a stranger into shipping. The white heads tried to join in the conversation, gave it up, and took their accustomed places in front of the Board of Trade. Many of the fishermen were foreigners, and spoke unknown tongues that, except for the common terms of a seiner or a Grand-Banker, would have been unintelligible to their American mates.

The air was salt with the odor of fish drying upon flakes on the Neck. It was also strong with the good-natured oaths that were bandied from man to man. Swearing in times of danger, or anger, or disappointment one can readily understand, and sometimes pardon; but the unnecessary oaths of greeting, of inquiry, of information, or of jest, — these are past apology, and are the shame of classes far more refined than our seamen.

The Reverend Eric Nelson had some such thoughts as he strode up the street from the ferry landing. He was in the habit of meeting the fishermen as they came in from their long trips. No one else seemed to care for them. Eric Nelson had been a sailor himself, and knew that a fisherman stood a better chance in a deadly fog-swell than he did upon some of the streets of the city. For this reason he met them, talked with them, persuaded them, started their bank accounts, kept their savings books, and was their friend. For

these reasons they learned, many of them for the first time, to respect a clergyman. For these reasons, as he strode up among them, ribaldry and profanity instinctively hushed, and many a rough face, hewn into a stern mould by storm and salt, softened into a rare smile that made it beautiful.

The "Reverend Nelson," as he was called, had no more cant about him than a cod. He never introduced religious matters in an apologetic way. He was a man. He did not string a fellow up on a creed and then consider him saved. That is not the way with a Norwegian pastor who stands six feet three in his stocking feet, who has the fair straight hair, the blue eyes, the ruddy beard, the winning smile of the Norseman; who had undergone all the hardships and known all the vices that attack sailors from London to Hongkong and back again by the other sea; who had been "brought up short" (he called it "being converted") by the Supreme Power on the west coast of Africa, and who had never for a moment deserted his new allegiance since.

A goodly proportion of the fishermen who sail out of Springharbor are Swedes and Norwegians. Not one of these escaped Eric Nelson's searching catechism.

"Where are you from? What is your name?" He followed his countrymen to the lounging-place in front of the post-office, into saloons, into worse places, even into the city jail, and fired these brusque questions at them as the Norseman fires the harpoon into the stolid whale.

To seek out his own people had become a gentle mania with him. The search for men is more exciting than creeping for the rare mushroom on the downs, than hooking the rarer halibut off the rocks of the Point, or even than tolling up mackerel in the harbor. The Reverend Eric Nelson put rather more enthusiasm into this search for Norwegians than some of his friends could understand. It had often provoked inquiry. Did the reformed sailor fear a revelation from his old home? Had he ever wronged any one, and was he prepared to make reparation? Not that he neglected the occasional Irishman who drifted upon the fishing-grounds, or the Germans, or the Nova Scotians, or the Portuguese, who had made a settlement in the city. No one could accuse the founder and pastor of the "Fishermen's Refuge" of spiritual laziness. But Eric Nelson would lose his dinner, would almost forego a service, for the sake of running to his lair a Norwegian whom he had not seen before. This could hardly be for the sake of speaking his native tongue. This persistence in one direction was accepted as a bit of clannishness, or patriotism, and let alone at that. Sometimes when he came back to his boarding-house after a busy day, into which he had cast the whole of his enormous vitality, he would throw himself upon his carpet lounge, his eyes fixed steadily upon a worsted motto representing a girl clinging with pitiful pertinacity to a lonesome cross placed upon a more lonesome rock somewhere in the riotous ocean — a work of im-

agination giving one the impression of despair and death rather than of rescue and security. This rude art represented to his mind the essence of the Christian religion to which he was devoting his life. It perplexed and inspired him.

"If the cross could only be put on top of a light-house," he murmured to himself, "then the Rock of Ages and the Light of the World would be one. But supposing the tide should rise there," looking at the embroidered picture, "nothing under heaven could save that girl in a blow."

Thus the sailor argued with pardonable intelligence. What some of the "regular" clergymen might have called lack of reverence, this nautical evangelist considered enlightened reason.

"If she had only sent me a picture of him, I think I could find him yet." Eric Nelson had repeated this sentiment a hundred times to himself with that childlike faith that exasperates us when we see it in a sensible man who ought to know better, and which stuns us when it is fulfilled in a natural way, as if the contrary were the preposterous thing.

Four years ago, when Eric Nelson cut adrift from his Methodist pulpit and created the Fishermen's Refuge, he received a touching letter. The postmaster had called him to the window and asked him to translate the address.

"You're a Scandinavian of some sort, Mr. Nelson, and can read it for me. I suppose this means Springharbor." The official pointed at the geo-

graphical section of the letter's address. It was written very indistinctly in a quavering hand, "Sprughabur, Amerika."

"I am a Norwegian," answered Eric Nelson, with a stately inclination of his tawny head, as if he wished that fact isolated in the postmaster's memory once for all. The dingy envelope had been ruled from the lower left-hand corner towards the upper right-hand corner. The minister read the inscription aloud in his native tongue.

"That 's me," he said, curtly, starting to open the envelope in his quick way.

"Hold on, Mr. Nelson," said the postmaster, putting out his hand. "I don't doubt *you*, of course. But won't you just translate it first?"

"I beg pardon. It reads, 'To the Sailor Missionary.' You are right. There is no such person in Springharbor." He handed the letter back. The postmaster for a moment looked irresolute.

"I don't know of anybody that has a better right," he suggested anxiously.

"I come as near to it as I can," said Eric Nelson, with a rare smile. "If you say so, I 'll take the letter, and open it, and read it, and if it is for anybody in Springharbor who knows sailors better than I do, I 'll give it back. Will that do?"

"That is straight and fair," said the postmaster. "And so are you. Take the letter and act your judgment."

And Eric Nelson, thoughtless of the high compliment, only thoughtful of the letter, took it, and

crossed over, and went down Dock Street to the Sailors' Reading-room, deciphering the letter to himself, reading aloud with the intense absorption of a self-forgetful man.

AARENDAL 27 *July* 188–

DEAR SIR PASTOR, — Our son who fishing in Sprughabur ship I read about has not written for twelve years. We can learn nothing about him so far away. I have written every port almost in the world. Will Sir Pastor of his goodness enlighten us whether he is living or dead. Harold was a good boy to his mother before he went. I am almost beside ourselves with grief and tears night and day for ten years and can hear nothing. He is an affectionate Dear Son. Please find our child and enlighten us, as Pastor reads this.

HANNAH TÖNNESEN
Aarendal Norway.

Now Aarendal was not more than twenty-five miles from Eric Nelson's own birthplace. Tönnesen was a familiar name in that region. He thought of his own mother. His large eyes filled. If he had neglected to write to her once a week until she died, how she would have suffered, the poor woman! This pathetic appeal came to him like a brand from heaven. It touched his great heart as the gale sways a towering pine. It seemed what he called providential to his religious mind that the lonely mother, after a fruitless quest of so many years, should find a neighbor in the unknown pastor whom she now addressed. To save sailors was his horizon. It was as broad as the sweep

from Eastern Point Lighthouse. But to find Harold Tönnesen now became his peculiar and personal ambition.

Eric Nelson was a sincere man with a Methodist education. The phrases that had lost their meaning to critical minds were not cant to him. "For Christ's sake" was not a stock quotation. It was everything to him that the Master of the World had called fishermen to be his followers. This vital argument never failed him in the pulpit. Every fisherman, in his view, was a treasure lost or saved. That individual Norwegian now aroused the full enthusiasm of the pastor's fervid nature. Perhaps he did not realize, as time went on, how much of his success as a missionary was due not only to the known Nazarene, but to the unknown Harold Tönnesen.

At first he had written to the stricken mother once a month, encouraging her to believe that he was doing all he could to find her "affectionate Dear Son." But lately he had written less often: it might have been over a year since he had done so. Only the night before he had started from his bed with the vivid impression of having discovered the man he had sought for four years somewhere on Main Street. He proved to be a bronzed, thick-set, wicked fellow. Eric Nelson's fraternal appeal fell upon this stolid man like spray upon Norman's Woe. Dreams influence the least superstitious people, and the canny Norseman, whose mother had crooned to him tales of elves, awoke

next morning with the conviction that the hour of his meeting with Harold Tönnesen was at hand, though he found it hard to believe that his derelict could be such a brute as his dream foretold.

So when he stopped in front of the bank and the post-office on this Saturday morning he cast a searching look over the lazy group of fishermen to note the unfamiliar faces. The rain of oaths ceased. Eric Nelson always exhaled the air of a pastor. The fishermen, though slow about everything else on shore, were quick to do him reverence.

As he approached, towering above every one else in the street, his blue eyes glistening like the search-lights of a man-of-war, he noticed a short, thickly built foreigner, evidently a Norwegian or a Swede. This man started down Main Street. The stranger seemed about thirty-five, and had a red beard, and although the full light had not fallen on his face, Eric Nelson thought that it had the reckless contour of a man who was ready for any dissipation that a new port might afford. The dream of the night flashed before him.

"Who is that? When did he come in? Where is he from?" Approaching the nearest fisherman, he thrust these nervous questions at him, pointing at the man disappearing down the hill.

"I dun'no'. Who d' ye mean?" said the fisherman, stupidly, without turning around to look.

Eric Nelson could have crushed the fellow with one grip of his mighty hand. He started to say a

sharp word, and then recollected himself. Then it occurred to him to follow the stranger, who was already becoming obliterated in the Saturday crowd. As impetuous as the north wind, he began to run.

"Hold on, Mr. Nelson! Why in such a hurry? I want to speak to you about that matter of furnishing a bowling-alley in your rooms." Eric Nelson turned around. For a Springharbor man he might not have stopped in this crisis. But the summer boarder was an unknown quantity. He might give fifty, a hundred, or possibly two hundred dollars. Besides, this particular man was more than a boarder — nay, even a cottager on the Azalea Road. What opulent possibilities in that fact!

"I'll be with you in just a minute," said Mr. Nelson, putting out his hand in an appealing, affectionate way.

"My train goes at ten eight. I have just twenty minutes," said the summer gentleman quietly. "Perhaps you can attend to your other matter later."

Eric Nelson gave a last look down Main Street. The man had disappeared. With a deep sigh he gave himself up to the cottager and the cause.

"I will walk to the train with you," said Mr. Nelson politely, throwing himself into the present opportunity.

He did not know this person's name; nor did he need to. It was enough to him that the man had taken an interest in the fisherman's work, and

the house that he in his ecclesiastical way had called a Fishermen's Refuge. Only last week he had given an evening talk over at one of the summer hotels. A number of fashionable people were present. One enthusiast — a lady — was so moved by the discourse as to write a poem for a Boston paper in behalf of the work. This gentleman had come up to him after his talk and said, in a businesslike way, that his interest was worth cash for the cause, and he asked where the "Refuge" was, and what was needed. The summer people had, on the whole, been generous in helping Eric Nelson's work. But somehow, from this particular summer guest, with his unostentatious evidences of wealth, the missionary expected a great deal.

Now the minister was not exactly what we call an educated man. He knew nothing of Harvard, but everything of life. Sailors and fishermen he knew microscopically, and when he talked about them he became eloquent. Few could withstand his torrent of enthusiasm. Springharbor itself had subscribed for him generously.

As the two walked to the train, Eric talked in his quick, moving way. His companion was touched. He had made a large fortune suddenly and easily. It occurred to Eric Nelson that he had made it at sea, for the few remarks he had passed upon nautical matters were unusually intelligent for a "boarder."

"We have a service at three next Sunday afternoon. Can't you come?"

"I must drive then. I have an engagement to call." The gentleman spoke with a tone of real regret. "My wife wishes to see some friends," he explained, under the minister's serious look.

"I have an extra meeting at half past seven tomorrow evening. It is a praise service," said Eric Nelson, as the train came in from Stoneport. He bent over his new friend, and seemed to compel him by the incalculable power of a concentrated and consecrated life, added to that of a superb physique.

"I will come," answered the cottager quickly.

"I hope that you will bring your wife," urged the pastor.

"I don't think that she would enjoy it," said the gentleman, in what seemed to Eric a bitter tone. Then the train moved off.

Unconsciously calculating how much the next Sunday evening's service might mean to the success of his work, Nelson plunged back into the city, taking up the excitement he had left. All that day he searched in vain for the stranger. He asked a thousand questions, and came back to his lonely boarding-house at supper-time exhausted of nerve and muscle.

After tea he allowed himself a few moments rest, the first in the long day. From his high room overlooking the beautiful harbor, the outline of the Blue Hills of Milton began to be purple in the setting sun. The royal tint crept nearer. It overtook Marblehead Neck. It approached and engulfed the granite tongue of Norman's Woe.

Eric Nelson had seen many of the superb sunsets for which Springharbor is famous. But this evening he held his breath as the colors came and died. It was nature's oratorio. The red glory of the sun disappeared behind the black hills. Then followed a procession of golden yellows that crowned the sky, that made flaming ribbons of the thin clouds suspended over the west, that lit the bay. Too soon the radiant tones passed, and the gray of the night crept in, swept in, and entreated the soul to contemplation and rest.

The burden of the day fell like a gauze from the pastor's heart. His brain cooled with the night. Longing to wait for the lesser stars, but flogged by his cares, he turned to his Bible and to his pen.

"Is n't God beautiful?" he murmured to himself devoutly as he reluctantly drew down the curtain. With that naïve prayer he lit the lamp and began the sermon that he was to preach the next day.

When the Reverend Eric Nelson stepped up on his platform, covered with red ingrain carpet, that Sunday evening, the room was nearly full. The faithful cornetist was at his place by the piano, tapping his yellow instrument affectionately. The pianist, a merchant in town, like the cornetist, supplied the music for the "cause," and did it with a vim. At this moment he was trying to catch the pastor's eye, and was pursing up his mouth in the act of suggesting an opening song.

The boy quartet sat behind the cornetist, next to the piano, in a solemn row, anxiously hoping that the two set pieces which they had practiced during the week would not suffer wreck. The music was the great feature of the Refuge, and the half-smothered note A of the cornet answered many a stolid heart, wondering, "What did I come for, anyhow?"

The room had been quaintly decorated by some boarders enthusiastic for nautical effect. Condemned herring nets were festooned as a frieze about the walls, making a sharp contrast with their black cork buoys against the white plaster; while from the ceiling were suspended a dozen transparent glass globes such as are used in fishing. Oars were crossed over a miniature dory at the end of the room, giving the effect of a strange coat-of-arms. Behind the platform were two models of fishing-schooners, complete in every detail, each encased in a glass frame. These many reminders of his calling could not fail to put the fisherman at his ease. They always impressed the visitor. With the exception of the platform and the motto that arched it, the room looked more like the casino of a small seaside hotel than a place of worship. It was attractive and homelike. In the lamplight of this strange place the glass globes swinging over the heads of the audience seemed more than mere buoys to hold up nets to the surface of the ocean. As the sailors looked up their hearts were lifted too. The transparency, with its

pressing invitation to "Come In," flashed from the outside of the building up and down Dock Street. A fine carriage stood before the door. Its coachman and footman looked superciliously over the heads of people. At the entrance an assistant urged the passers-by and the undecided to walk upstairs to the meeting. This portion of the city offers serious temptations of a Sunday night to the wind-scarred fisherman. What chance has a floating population against land-sharks? That evening many new faces, first attracted by the lights, the hospitality, perhaps by the barouche, appeared in the upper room.

Fishermen were common guests at the Refuge, but benevolent boarders were rare visitors; so it was fitting that when the gentleman of the day before appeared, true to his appointment, accompanied even by his wife, he should be escorted to the front seat of honor by the pastor himself. It was easily noticeable by the ladies of the congregation that the gentleman's wife sat down beside him with a gingerly flounce, and then raised her gold lorgnette to her eyes, sweeping her head with the air of expecting to discover a nest of cholera bacilli in the thicket of the audience. She was equipped in what she thought to be the height of fashion. It was the fashion of a mind that swung on an orbit bounded by ostentatious pride and conventional effect. The sparkle of her diamonds, the sheen of her fur cape, the pompon of impertinent feathers upon her intricate bonnet, these

flaunted themselves as uncordially upon that plain audience as a dress-suit upon a Grand-Banker would have done. The women near her, praying for their husbands and sons and lovers upon the sea, shrunk away from this creature of an upper stratum that had long since cooled. She herself, by indefinable movements of the shoulders and restlessness of her feathers, informed the tragic audience that she was out of her element — as if they did not know it. All this might have embarrassed any other man than Eric Nelson, who, glancing at her just before the service began, attributed her disdain to mannerism rather than to heartlessness. Behind, two settees away, sat a fisherman's widow swathed in a crêpe veil, and wearing a black and white calico dress.

Hardly less of a contrast was the gentleman himself. He gave the quick impression of a plain, serious man, one oppressed by a burden, and perhaps by a sorrow. He did not look like a rich man, and from his steady eye, his massive jaw, his determined smile, his ready-made clothes, one might have guessed him to be a master mechanic. His wife was evidently ashamed of his unfashionable appearance, and he of her fashionable shallowness. He assumed an attitude respectful, quiet, and dignified. A close observer would have noticed his alert eyes gauging the room, its occupants, the musical instruments, the leader, with the curious interest of a thrifty capitalist making up his mind what to give and where to put it. He

inhaled the moral atmosphere of the place, respected it, and by a subtle attention was respected in return. When the music began his wife leaned over and whispered some sarcastic comment under her lace fan. For reply he took up a singing-book, opened it, and sang an affirmative bass. The Reverend Eric Nelson appreciated this attention to the service. It seemed to strengthen him for his customary twenty minutes' talk.

The clear cornet had attracted a few more men, who shambled in during the singing, each dropping to a back seat with the apologetic air of an expert fisherman who had lost a fat haddock just as it rose to the surface. Each one brought in with him a gust of salt cod.

And now the pathetic audience clung to the pastor's words. He was never weary of choosing fishermen's texts. These he treated in a peculiar way — original, because of his own nautical experiences, and ecclesiastical, because of his sectarian training. This evening he talked about the miraculous draught of fishes. He opened the subject as if it were entirely new, and as if the story of Christ ordering Peter to put down his net on the other side of his boat were a recent discovery from an ancient cursive script.

He explained the situation succinctly, and as he did so one by one the men on the back seats, whose heads were bowed upon their breasts from homesickness, exhaustion, dissipation, or indifference, raised their eyes and looked at the speaker unsteadily. The lady on the front seat yawned.

"Peter might have given a hundred excuses," continued Eric Nelson, raising his deep voice. "He might have said, 'I have fished on the Hunnipinks'" — referring to a well-known fishing-ground off the Point — "'and there was none there. When we used to go handlining there were plenty of fish, but the nets are catching them all up. Last week my mate and I tried Forlorn Ledge, and we only meshed one. We got on the grounds this morning at four. We have n't struck any yet; and I 'll bet you, if we cast over on the other side, as you say, in the mud bottom, that we won't raise a cunner, or even a sculpin.' That 's what Peter might have said!"

This vivid interpretation of the Scriptures the men readily understood. It was worth the whole run of New Testament commentaries from Barnes to Bruce. Eric Nelson had caught the attention of every man in the room.

"How tedious!" whispered the lady on the front seat, too loud even for "mannerism."

"He shall have a blank check," the gentleman murmured to himself.

Eric Nelson halted for breath. Should not a fisher of men use the quickest bait to catch them? Now that he had tolled his hearers to him, as they toll up mackerel with slivered herring, he made ready to land them with what he would have called the Gospel hook.

Just as he was about to begin in a more conventional vein, the door opened softly, and a man

passed in. Halting, irresolute, bashful at having interrupted the speaker and called attention to himself, he faced the minister for a moment, and then sank behind a broad shoulder.

The pastor started. His subject passed clean out of his grasp. It was the man who had escaped him the day before. It was the Harold Tönnesen of his dream. The simplicity and strength of his mind consisted in tolerating one idea at a time. The vision of the lonely mother in the hamlet of Aarendal, in far-off Norway, held his imagination. And her boy was before him. He no more doubted it than he doubted the solidity of the platform on which he stood.

With a boldness and pliability that always surprise us in natural orators, he launched into a new topic. Peter and his net had vanished. The audience, whose nerves were drilled to sudden changes in the weather and lapses in the home, took Eric Nelson's new tack as a matter of course. The gentleman on the front seat was intent upon the speaker. His wife sat with an insolent pose, such as one assumes at a condemned play. The boy choir continued to practice their next selection by breathing their parts softly between their teeth.

Striking straight at the missing man, Eric Nelson told the story of the letter received four years ago. He mentioned no name, no place. He dwelt upon the loneliness of the mother, her untiring quest by correspondence over the world, the ingratitude of the son, his own unceasing search, his

dream, and his conviction that the man would soon be found. He noticed that the strange sailor was much moved, and furtively wiped his eyes with a red handkerchief.

"And if he should happen to be present," continued Eric Nelson, advancing to the edge of the platform, looking at the convicted stranger over the fashionable lady, who now applied salts as an antidote to this passionate torrent of hortatory eloquence, — "if he should be present this evening, God help him! A mother is praying for him to come home. God hear her prayers! Christ is beckoning over the Atlantic Ocean to him. Heed his gesture! Come home! The erring son has been a flotsam over the face of the waters. Now he will find rest and peace. Oh, comfort the bleeding heart of the mother! Christ calls to the wanderer. Come home! God help him! Come home!"

The minister's voice ceased, and the sectarian intonation died away. The storm was followed by a still prayer. The little congregation were upon their feet before they knew it, questioning each other with their eyes. The cornetist philosophically enveloped his instrument in green baize. The boy quartet, disappointed of the important part of the programme, looked at Eric Nelson reproachfully. But he, dividing his audience like a golden meteor, bore down upon the man he sought.

"Let us leave this dreary place. How could you bring me here? I hear the horses stamp. They

must be very restless. Do hurry!" The lady spoke petulantly, gathering her wraps about her handsomely covered shoulders.

"I have a little business with Mr. Nelson, my dear," her husband answered, with unusual tenderness, helping her adjust her fur cape. "Had n't you better sit in the carriage until I come? It will only take a minute or two."

She went out haughtily, down the uncarpeted stairs, holding her long train disdainfully from the dust. With a sigh of relief she sank into her own cushions and assumed her own high station, as if she had been unjustly defrauded of it that weary, common hour.

"I have been waiting for you. God bless you!" said Eric Nelson eagerly, clasping the fisherman's hand.

With great feeling the man shook his in return.

"You are a stranger," continued the pastor impetuously. "You are a sailor, my friend, perhaps a skipper. You have just come in. You are a Norwegian."

The man nodded solemnly at each of these quick attacks. He seemed surprised that any one should take an interest in him.

"Perhaps you have a mother," continued Eric, panting.

The man shook his head dolefully.

"You may not have seen her for many years."

The stranger gave a sorrowful duck, and the tears welled to his red eyes.

"You have not heard from each other for a long time: is it not so?"

"It is, sir," answered the sailor, in a trembling tone.

The Reverend Eric Nelson collected himself for the duty he felt before him. He was going to be stern, but the other seemed so broken that Eric's heart warmed for his countryman. He spoke softly and simply in the Norwegian tongue.

"My dear friend, do you know that your mother may have been searching for you? She may have sent me a letter." He tapped his breast coat pocket. "She may have said that you were an affectionate dear son. Why have you neglected her?"

The room had cleared. The unpaid assistant had put out the lamps. It was dark where the two stood. One light still burned over the platform. The condemned nets seemed to writhe in the gloom. The glass balls glowed like distant moons. The summer visitor sat patiently in his seat. It was impossible that he had not heard the latter part of this conversation, at least. But what was an unknown tongue to him? He was as if graven to his chair.

The sailor sobbed. "What do ye mean by talking so? Your sermon near broke my heart. I 'm captain of the bark *Winderström*, eighty-seven days from Sicily, with salt. I have been on her these twenty years. I have n't a wife; not a child have I — d 'ye hear?" he said fiercely. "What

do you know what it is to have no one to love you — to pace the quarter-deck alone?"

"Why don't you go back to your old mother?" asked Eric tenderly. "Why don't you go back to Aarendal?"

For the first time he coupled the man directly with the place. He did it with a tone of official command. The Norseman's half-superstitious fancy suggested that this night would accomplish the mission of years, and restore the son to the mother. The mood of a prophet exalted him. He believed himself to be the wand of God. At his last word, spoken in a higher voice, the man before him was shaken by a convulsive groan. This reëchoed from the platform and the schooners under glass. The gentleman in front still sat with his head bowed low. He seemed asleep.

"*Mother?*" cried the sailor brusquely, starting up. "Why do you talk to me about mother? If I had a mother to go to, d' ye think that irons would keep me away from her? What d' ye mean by telling me I neglected my mother? If I 'd had a mother I 'd been a better man to-day. She died when I was born."

The captain of the bark trembled. It is not often in a lifetime that a man like that is seen in tears, and when this happens it is either in the presence of a priest or of a wife.

But Eric Nelson stared at the sailor. A fierce doubt of his own faith nearly strangled him. It was like a tornado catching a ship under full sail

dead ahead. His lips shriveled. His eyes grew wandering. His ruddy face paled. Such spiritual disappointment is not easily gauged by the commoner mind. The blow was blinding, and Eric Nelson's simple heart was stunned by it. He muttered a few words unintelligible to himself, in a voice strange to his own ear, intended to ask the astonished captain of the *Winderström* to await his attention for a few minutes; and then, feeling exceedingly dizzy, staggered to the platform.

"You must excuse me," he began, speaking with the impulsiveness of a boy. "I have had a great disappointment."

The gentleman rose courteously. His plain face expressed emotion.

"I am sorry," he said simply, holding out an oblong piece of paper. "Will this comfort you?"

Eric Nelson's back was to the light, and the paper in his hand was thus brought into the shadow.

"What is it?" he asked stupidly.

"I authorize you to fill it out for any sum which you need for the work. It is payable to your personal order."

Then for the first time it dawned upon Eric Nelson's mind that he held a blank check. But he did not yet realize the princely gift. He turned toward the light, and in a dazed way read the writing on the paper. The gentleman watched him with a searching look, in which was mingled the happiness that rich hearts feel in playing the

magician to the needy, and the cold reserve perhaps habitual to the man of business.

Eric Nelson turned the check over in his great hands, then looked at it, and read the signature again. The possibility of his suddenly having gone mad weighed slowly upon his mind. He repeated the signature aloud, giving it a Norwegian intonation, "*Harold Tönnesen!*"

He looked at the giver and stammered the name again.

"I beg pardon," said the gentleman gravely, "my name is Tennyson; the same as that of the English laureate, although I am no relation to him, of course. You may fill out the check, as I said, to your own satisfaction. I trust you entirely." His business being completed, he turned to go; but Eric held out his hand.

"Hold, sir; I have not thanked you yet."

"That is unnecessary now. I see that you are much moved."

"I *am* moved." Mr. Nelson started to say more. His voice failed. The gentleman's air of easy affluence, his confidence of position, even his carelessness of fashion, confronted Eric Nelson like a high stone wall. "Are you Harold Tönnesen?" The pastor of the Fishermen's Refuge addressed the millionaire with a sturdy courage of which the adjective manly is a meagre definition.

"I am Harold Tennyson," answered the gentleman in an indulgent tone, but with a face that seemed to understand the pastor's struggle. "My wife is waiting. I will leave you now."

"If you are Harold Tönnesen," cried Eric Nelson in a quivering voice, still insisting on the Norwegian accent, "for God's sake stop. I have a letter for you."

At that word the gentleman's face changed to a ghastly color. He turned abruptly. A wicked word started to his lips. But he controlled himself.

"I think you must be mistaken, sir," he answered loftily. "My correspondence is cleared up to date."

"If you are Harold Tönnesen," repeated Eric, with an authoritative gesture and in a confident tone, "I have a letter from your mother in Aarendal."

"He *is* Harold Tönnesen, I 'll bet ye!" said a gruff voice from the gloom. The captain of the *Winderström* strode up. He spoke in English, but with a strong foreign accent. "Don't ye know me? I know ye when ye speak. I, Carl Anderson, mate of the bark *Winderström* when you are afore the mast. Twelve year have agone. Ye don't bear me grudge fur handspikin' ye the day ye got two days off 'Frisco drunk? Give me yer hand, shipmate."

With the rude friendliness of an old acquaintance the captain of the salt bark pushed himself into the light, between the pastor and the summer visitor, and held out his rough hand. This the gentleman took mechanically.

But at this sight Eric Nelson's heart boiled

within him. The thought that he had been searching the slums all these years instead of the palaces was more than he could bear. That an outcast sinner of a sailor could forget his mother he thought quite possible; but it had never been conceivable to his simple mind that wealth could prove so heartless. It occurred to him to return the blank check, and then he remembered that it did not belong to him, but to the Refuge. Baffled and startled by the successive events of the evening, his nature was now shaken to its keel by the sailor's revelation. He looked at the undutiful son with the authoritative stefnness of a spiritual superior. He did not feel abashed before the man's wealth. Perhaps it had been acquired fraudulently. All he thought of was the poor mother.

"Yes," said the man, with agitated voice and respiration, "I am Harold Tönnesen of Aarendal." He stopped, looking around him, as if he sought a chance of escape. But the pastor stood between him and the door. He began again, in the manner of one seeking to gain time. "When I deserted the *Winderström*, at San Francisco, I struck for the mines. In six months I hit the Golden Gulch. Six months more and I was very rich. I married Senator McQuaid's daughter, and changed my name; but I think," looking appealingly at Eric, and speaking slowly, as if he had avoided the vital point as long as he well could — "I think that my mother is long since dead." He hesitated, and his strong eyes fell beneath the minister's contemptuous look.

"How do you know that she is dead?" asked Eric metallically.

"An old mate of mine told me so at sea. I had n't been in the habit of writing — for a long time," he added, with piteous apology. "But I wrote immediately, and got no answer. I think I wrote again. I never heard anything. She *must* be dead."

The captain of the bark looked from one to the other inquiringly. He had the natural awe of a pastor which is born in every Norseman's breast. He did not speak. His lips moved with varying sympathy.

"When this great wealth came to you, why did you not write home again to find out if the account was true?" Eric Nelson addressed the gentleman as if he had been a common sailor. The minister's voice grew sterner. It seemed to come from a far spiritual height. "Why did you not *go?*"

"I meant to," faltered the unhappy man. "But my wife" — He stopped, ashamed.

"Well?" said Eric pitilessly.

"Is my old mother alive?" Harold Tönnesen raised his gray face.

"You don't deserve to have a mother," said Eric fiercely. "You threw her overboard when your ease came. How could you rest nights, how could you prosper days, when your mother was weeping her old heart out for her son? Don't you despise yourself?"

It never occurred to the two old mates that the

pastor of the Fishermen's Refuge had no right to lash a stranger like this. Harold Tönnesen bowed before him.

"Is she alive?" he groaned. "If she is — then my wife shall not" — He stopped again.

"That is a pitiful excuse for a man," stormed Eric. "She *is* alive. At this moment she is praying for you. Are her prayers worth as much as your blank check?"

With a superb motion Eric flung the light paper as if it stung him. It turned like a leaf, and fell at the rich man's feet. Not knowing what else to, do, Captain Carl picked it up, and, with a certain tenderness, put it in his old mate's hat.

"I will send her money to-night." Harold Tönnesen glanced at the check nervously, and lifted it towards the pastor without looking at him.

"Money?" scorned Eric. "Money! Why, man, she wants *you*. Don't you love your mother?"

"But how can I?" cried Harold Tönnesen. "She cannot come here. She would be unhappy. I cannot go there. My wife" —

"—— your wife!" The captain smote his right fist into the palm of his left hand.

"What did you say?" Mr. Tönnesen started to his feet. "How dare you, man?"

"Hush," interposed Eric, stepping between the two men. The soft, trained step of a curious servant sounded beside them.

"Mrs. Tennyson would like to know when you're coming, sir." The footman saluted re-

spectfully. His observant eyes were as expressionless as art could make them.

"Tell her to go home," his master answered savagely.

"Amen," said Eric, below his breath. His thoughts now came clear and fast. He realized the importance of the few minutes that were rushing upon them.

"You must telegraph for your mother to-morrow, sir. I will do it for you. The shock of knowing that you are living may kill her; but if she does not die, she must take the next steamer for America."

"I will consult my" —

"No, you will not," insisted Eric, grasping Harold Tönnesen's limp arm. "If you tell her, I see that you are lost." He stopped, and, like an inspired priest, raised his hand solemnly. "In the name of Christ I command you to authorize me to telegraph to your mother to-morrow." Eric Nelson stood to his greatest height. All the nerve and spirit within him were concentrated in that supreme word. His mien carried an irresistible power.

Harold Tönnesen bowed before this man of God.

"You may do it," he said humbly. "Let me go now, please. I shall be glad to see my dear old mother. I will try to make her happy."

The seaside was deserted. All but a few rich cottagers had gone to their city homes. The hotel

people did not stay to delight in the grand October colors. Dingy city streets do not show the yellow and the red, the purple and the gold, against the gray and green of the rock, against the green and gray of the sea; they do not show the picturesque herring fleet creeping to the westward past Norman's Woe as the moon wanes.

It was an October day, gleaming with sunshine and dancing with vibrations. There had been an easterly sea running, and the waves smote the granite shore. There was not a note of sadness in their echo. Beyond Springharbor, toward Azalea, several large estates stretch to the south, grasp the Atlantic, and fascinate with shady outlooks. An open carriage, correct in its luxurious appointments, drove between the red sumachs, the terra-cotta oaks, and the yellow elms, up the rented avenue of one of these summer homes. The stolid footman saluted and opened the door. With a grave smile, and with a word of cheer in a foreign tongue, a gentleman sprang out, and taking the other occupant of the carriage in his arms, deposited her gently upon the step.

She was the strangest woman that the North Shore had ever seen. She was evidently a peasant from some country beyond the ocean, for she was dressed in wooden shoes, in the coarsest home-made stockings, in a blue homespun dress that came only to her ankles, in a red and white bodice, such as you see in old German colored prints, and in an intricate cap or bonnet, not to be described by a masculine pen.

Her face, scarred by tears and loneliness and time, had the sweetest, most trustful expression that this world of woe can chisel.

Her son in evident agitation bent over her.

"Dear mother, I welcome you home. In a few days we shall go away to a better and a warmer."

"You are a good son, Harold; a very affectionate son," said the old woman wearily.

At the wide door stood a lady sumptuously dressed. Her cold eyes seemed to reflect the contemptuous look of her servants.

"There is my wife waiting for you, mother," said Mr. Tennyson, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

"I cannot see her. I only see a blazing light." The mother lifted her weak eyes.

"Alice," said Harold Tennyson, in a tone which the daughter of Senator McQuaid had never heard since she was a little girl in her father's house, "come down and meet your mother!"

Clinging to her son, and courtesying to her daughter, the old lady passed up the steps, and the footman helped to carry her to her luxurious bedroom, for they found her weaker than they had supposed her to be. The peasant woman noticed but two things — that her boy did not leave her, and that the sea glistened beyond the window.

The almost inevitable tragedy of the late atonement came to pass.

To be forced to remain on the North Shore till November for the sake of a dying woman was hard,

but Alice Tennyson bore it with what graciousness she could command.

Upon a bleak afternoon, when she was taking a fretful drive to Manchester, the old lady sank away suddenly.

Her son was with her. She put out her knotted hand and touched his bowed head feebly. "You are a very good, affectionate son, my dear," she whispered. Then the light of a perfect happiness glorified her face.

The shutters stood ready for their cold duty against the windows of the summer home when the family — the living and the dead — left the dismantled place together.

And Eric Nelson read the Lutheran burial-service in the Norwegian tongue.

THE EQUATION OF A FAILURE.

THE term Providence, as relating to a special interposition of the Deity, may be condemned by many good men and acute reasoners; nevertheless, it stands, and always will stand, as a synonym of the inevitable benefit that even exorbitant catastrophes beget. The fatalist is being driven from bog to quag. Modern reason is undermining his last firm foothold.

A boy dies in the bud of his high possibilities. Shall God be cursed for having sent an unreasonable suffering? For, from out of the decay of that beauteous body, cut down before its time, there springs, as from a seed, a great university in California. If that boy had lived ten decades, would he have accomplished half as much for the world as he did by dying in his thirteenth year?

A little while ago a railroad bridge fell, and twenty innocent people were ground and burned to death. The scoffer was loud in his denunciation. Such an opportunity for scathing the Deity is common, and is never overlooked by the atheist. There were three ministers and a college president among the charred. Clergymen could find no moral for the pulpit; for not a single railroad official was killed.

But that paralyzing disaster has presumably saved thousands of lives. The bridges of the country were overhauled and scores of them were condemned. How many probable accidents were thus averted!

Society lives only by dying, and it advances only upon the shoulders of its wounded. Every mechanical fault, every failure, every life that is seemingly thrown away, only makes perfection of safety a surer, a quicker possibility. Such is the divine law of physical casualties. The compound value to the world of every death by accident or disease can never be overestimated.

But how about the moral catastrophe? Here the problem becomes more intricate. It is not only apt to perplex, but to discourage. Herein obtains the doctrine of a personal Devil.

Will not the growth of drunkenness gradually turn the attention of legislators to the necessity of suppressing the manufacture of liquors? If this prove the price of the untold miseries and multiform crimes haunting the door of rum — then even a drunkard has his value, and is not entirely to be despised.

The other night, an outcast, seeking a free shelter, noticed an unusual flame in the cellar of a hospital. He gave the alarm, and a terrible conflagration was averted. By some law, higher than we can reach with our present culture, was the indignity of that wanderer's condition canceled by that single act? Had he failed in life, in order to meet

his beneficent appointment at such a day and such an hour?

Seen in such a light, even the most depraved, even the most astounding failures, become minor cog-wheels in the eternal machinery that propels mankind to the stars. It is a subject for suspicion, that if philosophers turned their spectacles more towards the intricate problems that enswaddle the miserable and the criminal, they would learn more of God and less of the Devil than they expect.

. . . . . .

It is four years since Greek Joe was first seen in Carbonia. How he arrived no one knew nor cared. But one morning he swaggered out of the solitary hotel into the muddy streets and invited everybody to take a drink.

Four years ago such an invitation could be given with comparative impunity; for Carbonia was then in its moist infancy. The enormous coal mine had but just been prospected, and the shaft was scarcely sunk. Miners had not yet begun to flock in by the hundred, nor had they been imported across the continent from Hungary by the thousand. Capitalists had not yet made and lost fortunes in corner lots; gamblers had not yet necessitated an antidote of clergymen, who spent their time squabbling with themselves about the propriety of close communion or Catholic parochial schools, instead of chopping up faro-banks into kindling-wood with which to start their church fires. Groceries had not yet come in; and the Company's store, an

institution of Sheol, like a Laocoön bound to itself the few employees in the deathly folds of debt. So when Greek Joe gave his comprehensive invitation on that first morning of his advent, only about twenty responded. Now, such a challenge could not be made good with less than two hundred and fifty dollars to foot the bills that the first responsive gulp would occasion.

Greek Joe went by the name of Mr. Joseph Darling that morning, for he was arrayed in a white shirt and black coat that commanded a contemptuous respect.

He was a tall, thin man of about forty, with smoothly-shaven cheeks and chin, and a drooping mustache that revealed the attractiveness but concealed the weakness of his mouth. He wore a felt hat that vainly tried to cover a vast forehead, which, as the toss may decide, indicated either great intellectuality or good-natured imbecility. His free manners clearly proclaimed him a vagabond, but one of an unusual order. The unfettered wave of his necktie; the flash of his shirt-stud and of his conversation; his copious draughts of raw whiskey, — these heralded his position in society in no uncertain voice.

"You 're right; I come from the diggings." He turned to a loafer who had remarked, in an admiring tone, that such generosity could only emanate from California or Colorado.

"How did you happen to strike Carbonia, Mr. Darling?" asked a short man with small eyes, who was running for town clerk.

"Your fame as a coal-metropolis attracted me from the Golden Gate," answered the new-comer, filling his glass for the third time. "The luxuries pale before the necessities. Gold courtesies to coal. Come a national catastrophe, and gold will go down and coal will kick the beam. My respects to Old King Cole." He bowed to the company at the bar, who responded to the effluent toast effusively.

"Whew! Can't he talk?" whispered the prospective clerk to his neighbor.

"He 's drunk enough to say anything, I 'll go a thousand ton o' di'mond," said a miner, with respectful enthusiasm.

"I had no idea that Carbonia were so famous," said the landlord, puffing up his cheeks with pride, "though I knew it were the comin' coal-metropolis of the hull world."

America is nothing if not sublime. It has the pork-metropolis, the oil-metropolis, the wheat-metropolis, the cotton-metropolis, for aught I know the suspender-metropolis. It was only in line with our institutions and our complacency that Carbonia should deal in swagger and futures.

"Coal-metropolis!" repeated Mr. Joseph Darling musingly. "May these anthracitic dreams, exhaled from the lower carboniferous formation, never be dispelled!" He cast a soft, paternal glance about his wondering guests.

"What the blazes does he mean?" asked the future town clerk, in excitement. "Does he take us for galoots?"

"Look here, stranger," said the miner sternly. "We ain't pertic'lar about your standin' treat, but when it comes to talkin' in a way calc'lated to bring discredit upon Carbonia, I 'll bet you come in the wrong caboose!"

That part of the world was not then what it is now; and the third sons of English lordlets and college graduates and boomers had not yet cast their dice for fortunes in this undeveloped coal section. Whole-hearted, ignorant rudeness still ruled the region.

But the stranger was in nowise abashed. He motioned to the troubled landlord not to interfere, and after pushing the bottle temptingly towards the miner, said: —

"Now, pard, that 's real unkind of you to treat a stranger so suspiciously! You can talk your way, and I can talk mine; we both uphold the glory of Carbonia. Have n't I come a thousand miles to settle here and speculate, and to draw capital and industry to this place?"

"Hay! — Hay!" approved the candidate for clerk.

"That 's the talk! Now, George, shet up," said another. "Take a drink, an' let the stranger spout all he wants ter."

"Here 's my fist, sir," said George, the rough foreman of the prospecting shaft. "Ye mean straight. If ye 'd talk a little less high-falutin' an' say 'damn' more, I 'd like ye better!"

"Boys, I 'm sorry not to oblige you, but I don't

swear. I have n't sworn since I left" — his voice changed to a tone solemn in contrast with his previous flippancy; and then proceeded — "since I was twenty-three years old."

A roar of coarse laughter greeted this announcement. It was considered a capital joke.

"Gentlemen!" Mr. Joseph Darling drew himself up with dignity. His voice trembled. The effort to concentrate his glance showed that he was upon the borderland of intoxication. His right hand jumped to his breast. "Gentlemen, I spoke the truth. It is the only truth I have left to speak; and, God knows, I'll protect it, or die!" His weakened face, although relaxed by liquor, became determined; and his new companions believed the stranger. In a burst of general good-fellowship that so frequently overtakes such men, they crowded around him, shook him by the hand, patted him upon the back, and swore in a maudlin way that they believed his word and would be his friends.

Only the man who went by the name of George was cautiously inclined. As the company dispersed he was heard to mutter: "I alluz mistrusted a feller that was too good to say 'damn.' I knew one, an' he was strung up for hoss stealin'."

This was the introduction of Greek Joe into Carbonia society. He soon became known as the hardest drinker and the cleanest-mouthed man in town. This hybrid characteristic was so unusual that Darling came to be looked upon as a sort of a

free show; and the host of the villainous hotel did a rushing liquor business every night.

Whatever Darling touched turned to whiskey; and when inebriated he talked as no one had been heard to talk in the place before. Night-time and intoxication came to him as a matter of course. Then the men flocked in from all sides, and plied him with drink. Then he forgot that he was nothing but a shiftless good-for-nothing vagabond, and he became an orator. Erudition, quotation, wisdom, incisive sentences, excellent rhetoric came like gold-dust from his lips. Every night he was madly applauded, until he was carried to bed. But the next day, no hint, no suggestion, no bribe could induce him to account for his past existence. It was a dual life that Darling led, each phase distinct and independent of the other — a life of alcoholic dissipation — a life of inflamed intelligence. In all this he never uttered a ribaldry or an oath.

One night he got a little drunker than usual. He mounted the table and harangued the barroom. Messengers were quickly sent out, and soon all Carbonia was on hand. He began to speak in favor of coast defenses and a navy. He held his hearers like slaves. His eyes flashed as he amassed arguments and statistics.

"Grant was one of the few army officers not jealous of the navy. He said upon his death-bed: 'We should have a good navy, and our seacoast defenses should be put in the finest possible condition.' What has the country done? We are at

the mercy of any fifth-class naval power. The government goes on the principle that every foreign vessel will be paralyzed at sight of our tubs, and will drop anchor to be popped at by our guns."

As he spoke, his eyes began to grow dull, and he looked into vacancy. Then he lifted his head loftily.

"I now will sing of the commanders and the ships," he said; and swayed off into an undulating, unknown tongue: —

"'Boyohtohn men Pehneleohs kai Lehitos ehrchon
Arkesilaos te Prothoehnohr te klonios te,
Arkesilaos'" —

He faltered, repeating himself.

"'Schoinon te Skohlon polyknehmon t' Eteohnon'" —

He looked about vacantly.

His audience held their breath, and shook their heads.

"He 's mad," they whispered.

But on went the orator, his unintelligible phrases reverberating like waves against a coast.

"The doctor! Send for the new doctor! Hold him! It 's the snakes! It 's D. T." But no one dared to touch the speaker, for his strange words carried a strange power.

"Maybe it 's Chinee," suggested the clerk in a whisper.

"I bet it 's more like Cherokee," said George the miner, with a scowl of superior wisdom.

The doctor came at last. He was the only educated man in Carbonia then. How much or how little that meant, nobody knew; he had only arrived a month before.

He approached the drunkard, who was now gesticulating from the table furiously, while his unknown speech rolled on. The doctor eyed him with anxiety, and listened attentively. The orator, pleased to have a new hearer, turned quickly and addressed the physician, thus: —

"'Ohkaleain Medeohna t'euktimenon, 'toliethron,
Kohpas Eutrehsin' — Oh! — Ah — Eh — 'Thisbehn!' " —

The orator's rotund voice dribbled and oozed away; he staggered a little and stood staring. The doctor motioned to a stout miner to go up behind the drunkard, who stopped gesticulating — hesitated, looked about appealingly, reeled, and fell into the miner's arms.

"Put him to bed," ordered the doctor. "He 's all right — only too drunk to know what he is talking about."

"When ain't he?"

"What is it? Chinee?"

"Jap. I 'll bet it 's Jap."

"Dutch lingo."

"Parley Frangcheese."

The doctor shook his head at these terse suggestions.

"The — ah — gentleman — was giving Homer's Catalogue of Forces," he said, with the momentary

forgetfulness of an educated man thrust for the first time into mining society.

"*Hey?*" from the crowd. The general jaw dropped blankly.

"I mean," the doctor hastened to explain, "this is not a case of snakes. The man was talking Greek."

. . . . . .

The few years with which we are concerned went fast in Carbonia. The muddy, one-street, one-story village had become a stone city. For Carbonia's deep mines were furnishing coal to the great Northwest, to San Francisco and the South. In turn she had insisted upon huge hotels, dazzling saloons, aromatic drug-stores, and all the luxuries of fast life; and had got them upon demand.

Carbonia was founded upon subterranean galleries that led to inexhaustible wealth. It was now no mushroom affair. The Carbonia Coal Company had ten shafts dipping into as many separate mines, each of which could support a population of five thousand. Carbonia, with her eight thousand tons a day "output," was now a permanent blot upon the landscape.

In proportion as the new city went up, Greek Joe went down. If he had not been a drunkard he would have been worth a million. He was worth the ragged shirt, the open-hearted shoes, the breezy hat, the frightened trousers, the rent Prince Albert coat, that had changed from black to green, as if in despair of an unattainable condi-

tion. These were Greek Joe's possessions in the city where a man arrived Monday with only a purpose, and left Saturday with a fortune.

Greek Joe (nobody called him anything else) was no longer a trump card to the barrooms. At infrequent times he was tolerated in Flannigan's palatial exchange for a few minutes. He was notorious in Carbonia as the only man who did not try to make a dollar; as a man utterly worthless and wholly given over to his own devil. Every one can have the satisfaction of this particular distinction. Many a man has sold his soul for drink, but Greek Joe would have cast upon the counter heaven and all its angels for one glass of whiskey. He bought no bread nor meat. What food was given to him, he ate with difficulty. The clothes he begged, he pawned; the pennies he wheedled from Jew and capitalist, each went into the same infernal till.

It was a little before noon. Greek Joe had shambled up to the gilt saloon and bleared in. His bloodshot eyes caught a glimpse of the voluptuous painting over the glittering bar. Even in his degradation he turned away, while a slight flush colored the skin stretched over his cheekbones.

"Hello, Joe!" said the city clerk briskly, stopping for a moment as he pushed by. "You've gone down pretty blamed fast since you came! Hadn't you better pull up right where you are? You'd better brace up, Joe!"

There was an embarrassing pause. The city clerk had never preached before. But everybody had had a moral shy at Joe, and this morning he felt that it was his turn.

"You 've got the makin' of a man in ye yet, Joe. — Ha! Listen! What 's that? My God! *What 's that?*"

There was a trembling of the earth, a sickening swaying of the houses, a dull thud, and a muffled reverberation!

Women rushed to their doors and cried out. The quick anxiety of a mining settlement ran through the town. Men poured out into the street, and stopped and listened; some with glasses in their hands, some with hands at their hearts.

"It 's an explosion!"

"What shaft?"

"Is it No. 2?"

"Run for No. 3!"

"Boys, it 's No. 1!"

With a simultaneous groan the black crowd broke and ran from the saloons, the hotels, the drug-stores, the quivering houses, and made in the direction of the ill-fated shaft.

"How many men?"

"Three hundred."

"Can they get at 'em?"

"How the devil do I know?"

Anxious questions and agonizing or snappish answers flew from panting mouth to mouth.

It was the first accident of the kind in Carbonia,

and the excitement was terrible. In ten minutes the whole city was at the mouth of the fatal pit. About it men swayed and faltered in the sickening vapors of the after-damp.

Three hundred men were imprisoned below; and whether dead or alive, who could tell? Number 1 had no connection at either of its levels with any exit other than this. It was the first, the deepest, the most profitable, of the Company's many shafts.

The shrieks of women running from a distance rolled toward the spot. The gruff groans of men intermingled with these. What a soprano! What a bass!

Orders, questions, supplications, threats, were hurled at those about the mouth of the Inferno.

Greek Joe at the first onset was left alone. In a dazed way he watched the crowd gather and melt from him. He rubbed his eyes and his forehead. Then he ran into the deserted saloon.

"A drink! The old stuff! Only a couple of fingers. For God's sake, quick!"

The barkeeper looked at him with open contempt, and pushed the bottle toward him.

"Take it — and get out, you —— beast!"

The abandoned man, who drank when others wailed, writhed under the scorn and insult, but filled a glass to the brim and gulped it down.

"Put up the shutters!" ordered Flannigan; "and don't you ever let that bum in here again!"

He pointed to the swaying figure of Greek Joe running as fast as he could toward the exploded mine.

"The superintendent! Send for the superintendent!" shouted the crowd at the shaft. Then it fell out that the superintendent had driven down the road some forty miles, where there was a blockade upon the track. He had expected a ton of dynamite yesterday. An accident on the road had delayed it. He was out of it. The exigency was sufficient to call for his personal supervision.

So it came about that there was no order at the top of the shaft. The agent was there, whispering darkly with the chief engineer. Foreign miners were there by the score — Poles, Hungarians, Finns, and Italians. These jabbered violently, most of them in their own tongues. Dark women, wild as gypsies, tossed their braided hair and wrung their hands. They wailed piteously, telling their babies that they were fatherless.

George was there by the merest chance. He was the foreman of the mine, and had happened up a few moments before the explosion occurred. The young doctor was there, peering into the blackness of the depths. He still panted with the exertion of his run. He was by far the coolest present. His young face took on the experienced and even cheerful look that men in his profession assume in the presence of the gravest peril. Many women appealed to him, noting his air of authority and hope, sobbing, "Oh, Doctor, Doctor! Will ye get them out, Doctor dear?"

And then Greek Joe was there. How had the weak drunkard made way through the pressing

crowd to the centre of that horrified circumference? It had taken this catastrophe to electrify Greek Joe to life. There was a new erectness to his body; a new independence to the toss of his head; a new intelligence to his eye. These symptoms translated him out of his old self. But no one had any time to think of Joe.

He pressed forward, passed the doctor, brushed by the foreman, and looked down into the shaft long and steadily.

"Where 's the cage?" he asked in a voice that was not recognized as his.

"In the sump," answered George, without turning.

"Are the pumps working?" asked Greek Joe, moving toward the engineer.

The man looked up and down Greek Joe, and merely answered: "What the —— is that to you?"

The rude answer made Foreman George turn round. He, too, looked at Greek Joe. "What the h—— are you here for? This ain't no time nor place for a drunkard like you. D—— ye! get out!"

The crowd caught up the refrain and murmured, as if glad to vent upon such a scape-goat the bitterness of its anguish: "Yes. D—— ye! Git out!"

There was a movement as if to thrust Greek Joe beyond the maddened circle. His tall body, made piteously lean from habitual dissipation,

straightened itself into an attitude of defense. The eyes that had for a year hardly looked a dog straight in the face met the rebuke steadily. A pallor, whether from mortification or intense resolve, had succeeded the habitual flush of his face, and left his high forehead almost free from the spots that blasted it.

A great danger clarifies only a few minds; it coagulates the majority. Even the efficient foreman looked stupidly about him, as if waiting for an inspiration or a master. It is in such seasons that a mind trained, if only for a few years, to intellectual discipline easily asserts its superiority.

"You 'd better rig up a line and get down there as soon as it dissipates, and stop insulting me," said Greek Joe, as if he were a gentleman.

"He 's right! Let him alone!" said a sharp voice from the second circle of men.

Greek Joe looked up gratefully, and caught the eye of the city clerk resting upon him.

"If Joe 's sober, you 'd better let him be. I 'll bet he 's equal to a gang," said another. It was the landlord who had first welcomed the flashing stranger four years ago.

These two influential remarks gave the drunkard the prestige which he needed.

The shaft was only two hundred feet deep, and though the after-damp was not wholly blown off, yet twenty determined, trained men with picks and shovels made ready to descend. The foreman went first. Greek Joe swung him off with

an envious look. The town drunkard had taken upon himself a strange authority. He had made several valuable suggestions, and had been obeyed like a respectable man. He acted like one who knew something about theoretic mining. The doctor, whose busy life had not kept track of Greek Joe, glanced at him keenly; but the crowd that does not think obeyed him and did not ask why.

"It 's my turn next," said Greek Joe decisively. "Give me that crow-bar and pickaxe."

No one withstood him. He had taken off his hat. The sun shone upon his massive forehead, sparsely covered with thin hair. "You 'd better not go," said the agent, who had the authority to stop him. He referred to the drunkard's physical weakness.

"I can think," said Joe steadily.

"Let him go!" cried the city clerk.

"I think he 's equal to it," remarked the doctor dryly.

The crowd that always rules on such an occasion as this made a murmur of approval. They watched Joe's head out of sight. Ten more descended, and the call came to wait.

When Joe touched the bottom of the shaft the foreman swung him off gruffly. "*You* here?"

"How bad is it?" asked Greek Joe, ignoring the other's tone.

"Look for yourself! Workin' night an' day, it 's a ten days' job to get this drift clear — mebbe more!"

Holding his lamp high over his head, Greek Joe stumbled into the drift. The narrow rails, set close together, glistened until the reflected light was lost in the darkness.

He made his way over the slippery sleepers, peering ahead critically. The foreman walked behind him with a jealous eye. The cold drops dripped from the forehead of the rocks steadily. The two men came up against the obstruction. An avalanche lay before them. It had done its work. It had closed the drift. Beyond were miners, three hundred of them! This new wall defied the rescuing party as death defies vitality.

The miners crowded about. A heavy silence fell on them. The foreman cursed the disaster aloud. But Joe stepped up and struck the rock with his pick. He was nearer the wall than the rest of them, and as he struck the rock he laid his ear to it. He was about to shake his head to the imperative demand of the foreman to "stop fooling time away," when he gave a start and held up his hand to enforce silence. A faint answer to his chance blow seemed borne through the vitals of the rock.

"Hark!" said Joe. "I've got an answer! I think it is they."

The men involuntarily raised a shout. The foreman bustled forward.

"Let me try!" he cried, raising his pick.

He hit three tremendous blows upon the wall. The men held their breath. Three distinct taps

came back. The men were about to raise another wild huzza, hoping that it might "carry," when Joe, whose ear had not left the rock, authoritatively stopped them. Irregular taps could now be made out. The ear trained itself quickly to this rude telephony.

"It's the Morse alphabet!" said Joe, laying hold of a pick.

"What?"

"They're telegraphing! They asked if any one understood."

"That's Steve Matson! I forgot about him," said the foreman, striking his head. "He used to be telegraph-agent down the road somewhere. He was fired for stealing, and got took in here three months ago. It must be Steve! Been an operator yourself, hey?" — turning to Joe with a shrewd look.

"Never mind," said Joe, "what I've been. I'll answer 'em."

". . . . . ." Joe hammered "Yes."

A response came back immediately. Joe interpreted it to the excited men, who began to look at him with real deference.

"*Explosion took place in first level. All in second level saved. Over thirty killed and burned. Two hundred of us left. Working our way to upper level. For God's sake get to us!*"

"Boys, what shall I tell 'em?" asked Joe.

"Tell 'em we'll do it!" yelled the men. They grasped their picks like one man, and leaped against the rock.

Joe bent to strike the answer.

"Hold on there!" cried the foreman. "Ye can't do it, an' ye know ye can't! What 's the use in tellin' a pack o' lies to a lot o' dying men?"

"We can try," said Joe quietly; "I guess I had better not discourage them."

The eager men fell to. The picks, the shovels, the crow-bars, the deep groans at every mighty stroke, the low words of encouragement, the blasphemous prayers, the mocking lights, combined to give a picture of life that is too often ignored. What has the complacency of a comfortable home to do with the history of the coal which makes that home possible?

"Hold there! Pry that away!" The experienced eyes of the foreman had discovered a rift. A rush of air almost extinguished the lamps. A jagged hole appeared. Before any one could stop him, the man who had opened it threw his pickaxe down and plunged bodily in. The slightest disturbance of the unstable body above would crush him to death. He knew this.

History records no sublimer instances of self-immolation than such unsolicited sacrifices in still-life. Did knighthood end with Gordon? There are yet left a few men who do not apply for a special correspondent when they do a brave deed. When in the life to come the bugle shall summon the heroes of mankind, the countless unepauletted men who scorned life to save it will far outrank the millions of mercenaries who blindly slew for another's glory.

The men in the drift watched their comrade writhing into the avalanche. He crawled slowly, like a wounded python. The opening, in the glare of the lights, seemed too small for a dog. The moist rustle of the earth stopped.

A suffocated groan reached the crowd. Like lightning, a second miner sprang after the first, grasped his feet and held on, while both were dragged out by sheer force. The first man was purple with asphyxiation.

"'T ain't no use," he gasped. "Ye 've got ter work with dynamite."

"Of course you have," said Greek Joe authoritatively.

"Dynamite!" ejaculated the foreman. "Good God! Don't you talk dynamite to me! We hain't got none! All we had was in that hell! God knows when we will get it! It 's blown up on the railroad accident!"

"I feel faint," said Joe suddenly. "Can't somebody hoist me up?"

. . . . . .

Greek Joe looked about the gaudy drug-store where they had carried him. The doctor and the apothecary were talking together about the Morse alphabet.

"I want a drink," said Joe faintly.

"Very well," said the young doctor. He held out a stiff glass of whiskey dispassionately. "If you 'll stop with this one," he added.

"It shan't cost you anything this time," said the apothecary patronizingly.

Greek Joe's pale, begrimed face flushed, and for a moment he turned away. Then he swallowed the fire at a gulp, and looked gratefully at the doctor. What would have killed most men revived him quickly. He encountered the doctor's eyes and tottered to his feet.

"Look here, Doctor," he said in a clear voice. "There 's something that has got to be done, and I want you to help me."

"What is it?" asked the doctor doubtfully.

"I 'm going to make nitro-glycerine," said Joe. "I 'm going to blow out that drift. Will you dare it with me?" Greek Joe leaned against the counter and gave the young man a penetrating look.

"Ye can't make it here!" broke in the apothecary.

"How many carboys of C. P. nitric and sulphuric have you in the cellar?" replied Joe.

"N — none," stammered the apothecary.

"You lie! Let me down! Come, Doctor, and see. I claim the right of eminent domain," said Joe, as he pushed the apothecary one side, strode behind the prescription department, and dashed down the cellar-stairs.

The doctor followed in a dazed way. The pungent odor of acids met them in the dampness. It was a large drug-store, and well equipped. Casks and carboys lay before them in apparent disorder.

Greek Joe took out the stopples from three huge glass flasks, and smelt of the acid vapors critically.

"Out with it! Up with that!"

"But how do you know?" demanded the doctor, laying hold of one of the big vats of nitric acid as if he were compelled by hypnotic power.

Greek Joe looked at him quizzically.

"Never mind how I know. This is HNO_3, is n't it?"

"I suppose so," said the doctor, smelling and nodding with forced intelligence. "The fact is, chemistry was not my forte." He checked himself, abashed to find that he was talking to this drunkard as if he were an intellectual man.

Half an hour later a motely assortment of glass jars, bottles, carboys, and iron pots lined the bank of the little stream that flowed through the town. Over this medley presided one who looked more like a mad magician of the middle ages than a nineteenth-century drunkard, but whose constrained movements indicated a balanced will. The doctor assisted with astonished apprehension.

"The cold water will make the experiment a success. It 's just as good as ice, and easier," said Greek Joe to himself aloud. He rolled a great iron pot into an eddy in the swift stream.

"Now, Doctor, you must stir while I pour. The centigrade thermometer will prevent any accident. Don't be afraid."

Greek Joe worked with feverish rapidity, but with no confusion. He poured a pailful of nitric acid, and another of sulphuric acid, into the iron pot. The red fumes boiled up. The doctor grew pale, but stirred the mixture valiantly with his

office-poker. Perspiration started from every pore of his body.

And now Greek Joe began to pour into the powerful solvent a thin, but continuous, stream of glycerine. With increasing vigilance he watched the thermometer that told the heat of the perilous mixture.

"You see those red fumes?" he said quietly. "Be sure you don't stop stirring! When those red fumes come up, I must exert the greatest of care. You know that means the oil is in the fire. Steady! — and if the mixture gets warm enough, an explosion would follow, sure!" He glanced at the centigrade again. "Hello! Seventy, and going up! Stir for your life!" He put the glycerine down, and seized a stick and agitated the mixture with all his force. After a moment he examined the thermometer again.

"It's all right now. The oil is whipped under. The mercury is down. It was a close shave, though! I can put more oil in now. If it had gone up to ninety degrees there'd have been no need of a funeral. They could n't have found us." He chuckled slightly to himself, and then became grave.

"You trust me, Doctor, don't you?" He turned suddenly and looked the doctor straight in the eyes. "You saw I did n't take a second glass."

"If I had n't noticed that," replied the doctor, "do you suppose I'd be here?" Nevertheless, the doctor trembled like the branches of a tree

caught in a cataract. He looked at Greek Joe with the expression of a soldier about to be shot for treason, opened his mouth to speak again, and then — dropped. Joe caught him, and laid him with his head toward the bank.

"It 's lucky the stuff 's done," he said, "or else I 'd have had to light down town. I 'll only wash it once. It 'll have to go. I guess I 'm steady enough to decant it all right. God keep me up till it 's done!"

There he worked alone. Every man in town was at the mine. Greek Joe and his temporary preëminence had already been forgotten.

It seemed a long while before the doctor opened his eyes. The terrible drunkard was pouring the thick, oily, amber-tinted liquid into empty kerosene cans, and was humming an old song over his dangerous work: —

"'And when me to my grave they 're bringing,
And all is o'er for ill or well,
Let no sad funeral bells be ringing.
Let tinkling glasses be my knell!
And on my tombstone be inscribed:
This man was born, lived, drank, and died.'"

The doctor recognized the song. The surprise of it brought him to his feet.

"I did *not* faint," he said pugnaciously. "Where did you learn that song?"

"Hullo!" cried Greek Joe, turning around. "You up? Oh, I picked the tune up somewhere. Here 's your hat full of water. Now I guess you 're all right. I 've seen men better than you

light out of the laboratory window. Even if you had fainted, it would n't be anything to be ashamed of. God knows, 't is n't so bad as drinking." He said the last with a rattle in his throat, as if he were breaking to pieces. But with supreme effort he pulled himself together.

"I 'm ready now." He looked at the afternoon sun. "It 's been a long while, though it seems but a few minutes. I 'll carry it. We 'll only take one can at a time, and leave the rest in the water. It 'll last 'em three or four days, until they get through."

Taking up the gallon can, filled to the brim with amateur nitro-glycerine, he began to walk toward the mine. The doctor, to do him justice, strode along close to the can. The man of medicine suspected that the compound was not made after the strictest scientific formula, and feared its instability.

Greek Joe's steps began to grow heavy. He advanced very slowly. Evidently the strength which his will had summoned up was giving way fast. The doctor put his hand upon the handle of the can, and helped to carry it. What if it had fallen from the drunkard's grasp!

As the two men approached the crowd at the mine, the beholders shuddered at their appearance. The doctor was trembling, and extremely pale. Greek Joe's disfigured face was drawn and ghastly. These dull people felt that, in some mysterious way high above their comprehension, Greek Joe repre-

sented hope for the entombed men. He had the look of a man who was walking to his death, and knew it, and did not repent it. His lax face was tense with a noble resolve; this very fact lent a kind of ferocity to his countenance.

The crowd pressed in his way with questions and entreaties.

"Back, for God's sake!" cried the doctor, with quivering lip. "Greek Joe has made nitro-glycerine! Here it is. Make way there! Don't touch us for your life!"

The moaning mass swayed from before them. Joe saw a clear space between him and the shaft. He walked through it steadily.

"Greek Joe's made dynamite!" shouted the city clerk.

"Is *that* Greek Joe?" gasped Flannigan.

Erect, with eyes fixed upon the mouth of the deep tomb, Greek Joe advanced, his step becoming firmer. The crowd acted upon him like a powerful tonic, but he seemed not to see, not to hear its exclamations. Women stopped shrieking. Men stopped shouting and cursing. As the town drunkard paused at the brink of the shaft, something resembling an awed silence fell around him. It was broken by the sobs and prayers of women.

"God bless him!" they cried. "God bless him!"

"Will any one lend me his gun?" Greek Joe asked in a husky voice. "I must have something to explode the charge with."

A half-a-dozen shooters were passed to him. He selected one.

"Good-by, Doctor," he said.

An Italian miner fastened the noose under his arms.

"I comma next," he volunteered.

Greek Joe shook his head.

There was an instant's hesitation before they swung him off. An Irish woman, who had a husband and three boys down below, stepped forward, and put her lips to his ragged sleeve.

Joe looked up bewildered at the touch.

"Bless him!"

"God bless him!"

"Gott sei Dank!"

Joe choked. In his eyes stood the first tear that had wet them all that awful day. With the first blessings that had fallen on his head for twenty years, startling and warming his heart, Greek Joe looked humbly about upon the people, and gave the word. So they swung him down.

The foreman leaned gloomily against the damp side of the drift. Already the third gang had started in, and progress was so slow as to be quite hopeless. He did not notice the new-comer's approach. The sound of picks and crow-bars and shovels drowned all slighter noises.

Greek Joe touched him upon the arm. The foreman started. He uttered a low cry that caused the men to stop work, wipe their foreheads with their oozy hands, and look around.

"By——! It's Greek Joe again! What 'che got there, — whiskey?" So said one rude fellow, pointing to the can. He stuck out his shovel playfully to touch it. The foreman reached forward to take it, wiping his mouth with his sleeve.

"Take care, boys!" said Joe, in a voice that was new to them. "Take care. You wanted dynamite. I've made it for you. You wanted dynamite. I made nitro-glycerine. It's just as good. A little jar is enough to set it off." The men fell back as if they had been told that the can was filled with concentrated typhus!

"That's the best place for it," said Joe, walking slowly to the rift which had been penetrated. "If I could get it in four or five feet, we might gain ten feet or more. I guess I'll try."

"He's mad!" cried a miner, dropping his pick. "Get back! Run, boys! He's gone loony mad!" Tools fell with a clank. There was a scuffling and a running, and the drunkard was left alone. He did not seem to notice this desertion.

He fell down on his hands, and the lamps stuck here and there into the shelvings of the rock cast his own shadow before him. This affected his imagination profoundly. He was not used to going down into the mines. He tried to shrug off the gloom of the situation. He sang again: —

> "'And when me to my grave they're bringing,
> And all is o'er for ill or well'" —

His voice faltered; but his hands did not tremble as he worked. Since noon they had been quite

firm. It was now after six o'clock. He had tasted no liquor for three hours. Since when had it been possible for him to say this? Such an alternate current of the mind and nerves was almost enough of itself to have caused the death of a shattered man.

With infinite care he placed his nitro-glycerine in position. He wanted to telegraph a word of assurance to the prisoners; but he dared not do so. A tap on the rock might start the charge before its time.

He backed out of the crevice on his hands and knees.

"Well," he said aloud, "I guess that 'll do. It was ticklish work. Now I wonder if I 've got to hit that can. I don't wholly understand this business. I wonder if I can fire straight."

He now began to tremble violently. He tried to take a light from the wall to look into the rift, but it shook in his hands so that he abandoned the idea. He retreated a few steps and sank down. His body absolutely rebelled. It would be carried by his will no longer.

He pulled the revolver from his belt and tried to cock it. His fingers shook so that they could not find the trigger.

One voice, only one, came from the darkness behind him, where the men were hiding for their lives.

"Look out, Joe!" it said. It was the foreman.

"Stay where you are. Never mind me, boys."

Joe's low voice had a sweet vibration and went to the miners' hearts.

"My God!" he whispered to himself, "only one more minute of strength! I have n't prayed before. This is n't exactly for myself. 'T is n't much to ask."

He grit his teeth together for the final effort.

"That 's it." He smiled. His thumb brought the trigger back. It slipped — a terrible detonation — a rush of air — a hail of stones swept through the drift to the shaft. A mighty reverberation brought hope to the prisoners in the heart of the mine, and to the women above.

The foreman's gang, pressed flat against a jut of the rock, at the foot of the shaft, rushed forward. They began to pick their way cautiously and fearfully. They looked at the sides of the drift for spots of flesh and blood. They had not gone ten feet when a foot stumbled against a soft substance.

George kneeled down beside the body and examined it attentively.

"It 's strange," he articulated slowly. "He 's dead; but he hain't been teched!"

They lifted him tenderly and, tying him to the ropes, sent him to the upper world. This done, they fell to work upon the tons of débris.

"That war han'some on him," said one of them after a long silence, stopping to moisten his hands. "Where did the cuss get it from? I hain't been so surprised since Lazy Jones struck it a thousand to the ton!"

"You bet!"

"Thet's so!"

"If there is a God, Greek Joe'll get the bulge on him."

This was said with much religious earnestness and sincerity. The sharp sounds of steel, the crunching of shovels, and the deep grunts timed to blows, began again. The gang worked with magnificent energy.

The foreman examined the great gap critically.

"Well — he's done what he died for! It's loosened the whole business. We can get through now, boys. I'll give you till to-morrow afternoon — Hush!"

He bent forward, for he thought he heard the voices of his immured mates!

. . . . . .

"Killed by the shock," said the doctor. He looked up from the blackened body and met the eyes of the city clerk. The dull wonder of a selfish nature was in them.

"Take him to my house. I'll see that he has a decent funeral," said Flannigan quickly, in a low voice.

"Hullo! What's that?"

The flannel shirt, worn and faded, tore under the touch of the doctor and fell apart at the breast, revealing a glistening object. The pitying crowd raised an exclamation of surprise.

"What is it?"

"Lord, it's gold!"

"It wan't drunk up nuther."

As the doctor reached for the trinket, it fell into his fingers. It was noticed that the young doctor seemed stupefied at the aspect of the bauble. He held it in a helpless way in his hand, and stared at it. The crowd bent lower to inspect it, as it lay heavy in his palm.

"It 's a skulla!" said an Italian, with the quick eye of his nation for the recognition of form.

"And bones underneath," added Flannigan.

"Greek Joe was a white-cap!"

"He was a vigilante!"

"I bet he belonged to some secret posse," ventured the city clerk consequentially. "D 'ye know what it is, Doctor? Lemme see!" He leaned forward to take it.

But the doctor covered the mysterious symbol reverently with his hand. As he bent over, his vest fell forward. (He had taken off his coat.) The small, keen eyes of the city clerk discovered upon the doctor's white shirt a similar badge. He was about to cry out and say so, when he encountered the doctor's eyes. Something in their expression controlled him. He thought better of it, and kept still.

Now an unusual thing happened. The doctor took off his hat, and knelt with bared head before the dead drunkard. The rough men looked on perplexed. In silence the doctor put out both his hands. He took Greek Joe's still yielding fingers and gave the dead man the grip of the most select,

secret, literary society which America's universities have produced.

Then he rose and spoke solemnly: —

"Boys! I can't explain it, but he 's all right. He was a Yale man — I mean," he added, seeing the blank looks around him, "Greek Joe was an educated man. He had been to college. Leave us alone a minute, won't you? It was *my* college."

The crowd withdrew slowly, quietly.

"It means something to belong," muttered the doctor, "even in this God-forsaken place. I 'm glad he died as he did — for the sake — of — the old pin."

With that, he clasped beside his own badge the emblem of the dead man's dead youth and promise; the fit survival of a life wasted, but redeemed at last. And, murmuring symbolic words, known in all that section only to himself and to the hero, he took his handkerchief and hid Greek Joe's face from human sight.

THE MISSING INTERPRETER.

Old Dave Plummet lived on the inner cove of Mackerel Harbor, close to the water. Twenty years before he had bought the little tract of land, just big enough for a house and a small garden. He had paid a hundred dollars for it. That was the time when you could fill a dory twice over in the day with cod from the mouth of the harbor; it was the good old time when trawls and nets and seines were not invented to impoverish the Atlantic and the fishermen; it was the golden time when a crew did not have to be intoxicated into shipping to the Grand Banks, and when most skippers banished liquor and even cards from their vessels.

But now the days were new. The village had grown into a town, and the town into a city, and the city had closed in around Dave's home. This made him no richer, for exorbitant taxes devoured the feeble satisfaction he felt in the increase of the value of his real estate.

Sell his home? Ask younger men than he to barter away what might be called their birthright; for these fishermen's huts, half in, half out of the water, become more like boats than houses to their aging owners. Dave Plummet was seventy-five years old. He was born in Mackerel Harbor, and

clung to the cove he lived on and to the house he lived in as he did to Sukey, his wife, and to the other members of his household. You see, there were four in the family: Sukey, who was ten years younger than her husband; Caddy, the cat, who was seventy-two years younger; and the dory, which was fifty-five years younger. Of these three, Dave spent most of his time with the dory.

It was an October evening, and already the sun was setting behind the copper-paint factory on the opposite side of the cove. Dave had just finished his supper of corned pollock, and, with lighted pipe, leaned back against the open door, watching his dory disappearing in misty shadows. It was a large dory, eighteen feet long; almost as many feet long as it was years old. It was painted a dull green on the outside, and its bottom had a coat of tar and kerosene. It was covered fore and aft along the rail. It had a mast, a mainsail, a jib, a centreboard, and several large pigs of iron as ballast. It was a genuine fisherman's dory, such as are used to go codfishing off the rocks.

"Why don't you get a sailing-boat?" For the last ten years neighbors and summer boarders had propounded this question. It was considered a poser. Sukey herself, after an unusually lucky season, had begged Dave to buy a sloop Down East. But the old man would always say, after a long pause: —

"Ain't I got what I want? She 's a ship, she is. There ain't nothin' safer in the harbor; an'

then, one man can manage her; 'sides, if ther' ain't no air, I kin row her out an' in myself."

Then, if you saw his dory beating into Mackerel Harbor from Killick Ledge three miles out, from Drunken Ledge four miles out, or from Saturday Nights six miles out; if you watched her with five hundredweight of fish in, driving against a stiff nor'easter, snugly reefed and not shipping a drop of water over her lee rail, you would conclude that Dave was right to brag of his dory and to stick to it. But that was ten or fifteen years before, when such skill was due more to the man than to the boat, when his hand was steady and his eyes were clear. Then he was considered the best dory-fisherman off the coast. Nobody knew the marks of the feeding-grounds better than he. Nobody could predict more unerringly the day when the dogfish would strike, or divine more quickly the rock bottom which the "dogs" passed by. For twenty years Dave Plummet had been "high line;" but now he was seventy-five years old, as old for his kind as the dory was for its kind. His arms were beginning to find it hard work to gaff the largest pollock and cod, and to haul them in; and his eyes were often unable to distinguish the lighthouse in the hollow and the rock opposite the barn, and other marks along the shore.

Give up his dory? It meant to stagnate like rain-water in the crevasses of the granite coast; it meant to be consumed by the desperation of longing for a life's habit. At his age, it meant to die.

What would old Dave do, if he had not his four-o'clock breakfast; if he could not get under way from the cove in company with his mates; if he could not gossip morning after morning at the trap about the prospects of the weather or of the fishing, or dispute the speed credited to the latest "flying-fisherman," or tell how times were changed, while he waited for tinkers, or squid, or blueback, or herring for his day's bait? It had never occurred to him that he could give it up. His wildest night-mare after a supper of griddle-cakes had never compassed such a thing.

But as he grew more unsteady about the hands and dimmer about the eyes, his old wife saw him off every morning with apprehension, and watched for him at noon with increasing anxiety. She did not mind it so much that for the last two summers he had not caught enough to pay for food and coal; but oh, if he should never come back at all!

Cap'n Joe, his next-door neighbor, had often begged Dave to give up dory-fishing, but Sukey had never asked him to do so. For, although he was a kind man, he was an obstinate husband, and detested female worry.

Now to-day the first real shock had come to her. Cap'n Joe had just come in and told her all about it. Dave had barely escaped being run down by a big schooner. He was sailing home with only fifty weight of fish in. He had not seen the great banker until it was right upon him. The steers-man of the banker supposed that the dory would tack out of his way, and so kept straight on.

"It were a narrer squeeze," remarked Cap'n Joe. "If the skipper had n't yanked the hellum hard down, it 'u'd been all up with Uncle Dave. I felt hot an' cold up an' down my column, until it sweat out my head. Ye 'd better keep him ter home arter this. Dave is gett'n' a leetle old fur fishin' off the rocks. He kin go shares in my boat if he wants ter."

When Dave got home that afternoon, a little later than ordinary, he did not say much, nor Sukey either. The one felt the humiliation of his first nautical carelessness, and was already morbid over it. The other was gathering courage for the demand that the wife felt it right at last to make.

"I hope Dave 'll be reasonable," she kept saying to herself. "We ain't hed a fallin' out fur since I don't remember when. I do hope he 'll be reasonable."

At last — it seemed a great while longer than usual — the early supper was over, and Sukey kept glancing furtively at her husband as he sat in the red sunlight, tipped back against the outside of the house.

He had a hard, suspicious look about the eyes that evening, as if he felt he deserved what was coming, and were ready to fight it. His neck, ravined with intersecting wrinkles, shone bronze in the setting light. His matted beard, long since tanned out of its original color, and now faded into a sickly yellowish-gray, hid the hand that rested

under the chin. For the first time the old man felt a sullen resentment against his seventy-five years. The prospect of being limited in any way unmanned him. He had been as free — why, as free as a fish all his life. No unnetted cod had more liberty. He struggled as if he were seined. *She* could not understand: she was a woman.

"Dave! I want to speak to ye." Sukey was trembling as she advanced toward him. She was a gaunt woman, gray and tall.

He turned his head uneasily toward the dory beyond the wall, and without an answer got up and walked to his hauling-line. This was made fast upon the handles of two broken oars which stuck out of the ground at that edge of the garden that stopped at the sea wall.

His wife followed him out. They both walked slowly: he, because of the thoughts that pounded within his brain; she, because of the inflammatory rheumatism which had laid her up the winter before.

"Dave!" she repeated. "Let the dory stand this ev'n'n', fur I want to talk with ye." She laid her bony hand, that had cooked for him, mended for him, washed for him, worked out for him, and been true to him for forty-seven years, upon his shirt-sleeve.

Dave had never been rough to his wife. He loved her after his own fashion — next to the dory; but this evening he shook her off rudely.

"But, Dave!"

"What d'ye want?" came back in gruff sea tones. He was about to unhitch the hauling-line and draw in his dory hand over hand, when he felt something pulling at his left knee. It was accompanied by a familiar sensation. Caddy, the third member of the family, the great black cat, who always followed her master's motions of evenings, had now raised herself, with a superb arch, upon her hind paws, and, with what she thought was an irresistible caress, clawed the rough cloth playfully. Caddy never presumed to remonstrate with Dave in the morning, when he took his dory; but to have the family apart after supper was too serious a matter to go unquestioned. The black cat knew as well as Sukey did what it meant to have Dave untie his hauling-line. The man bent to stroke the cat, who dared to be bolder than his wife. As he did so, a pleasant expression came slowly across his face. Perhaps the cat recalled to him his tenderest memory, his most poignant grief.

Three years before, the dread of Dave Plummet's unimaginative life came to pass. His only son, who had a good position in the counting-room of a fish-firm, became a drunkard. The natural sequence followed: the young man lost his character and his situation; and the familiar curse, whose misery Dave had watched among his neighbors all his life, struck home now to his own heart.

In those days, momentous in the history of two obscure families, Dave became a grandfather. His son reeled home one night to find a live baby and

a dead wife, and a few days after shipped somewhere, in a drunk, and had not been heard of since.

Of course Sukey took the child, and of course she and the old fisherman began to love it. When the baby was six months old, that they might purify it from paternal taint, the grandparents called in the clergyman of the fishermen's Bethel and had the child solemnly christened. They gave it the name of Caddy. But love, its mother's name, persistent care, and piety could not withstand the vicious inheritance. Caddy died, and in a poor corner of the storm-swept cemetery, upon the bleak hill, there is a little mound beside a larger one. Two dead wreaths still cling upon it. A granite slab bears this economical inscription:—

OUR CADDY.

ANCHORED ABOVE.

Call it coincidence or call it Providence, as you please, but the night the baby was buried a stray cat came to the house. She was a handsome, affectionate cat, and immediately appropriated a warm spot behind the kitchen stove, and another in Sukey's heart. How the old people came to pass on the name of the child to the cat no one could tell, they themselves least of all; but they did. It was one of those freaks of the rare imagination which visits simple homes like theirs, and which is more persistent because of its unfamiliarity. The neighbors were scandalized. Cap'n Joe and his wife, Mary Sarah, took the ground that it was

heretical; there were not wanting original minds in the cove who called it heathenish. But Caddy the cat was called, and Caddy she remained. The neighbors in time grew used to Caddy, and forgot their theological criticism; and Caddy walked to and fro, unmaligned and unmolested.

Now, as the old man stroked the cat, he thought, "Caddy don't call me old, nor pester me about the dory, nor tell me to stop fishin', as them women do," and his heart softened toward Caddy, the cat, and hardened toward Sukey, his wife.

Sukey, seeing his features lighten, mistook her opportunity, and laying her hand again, very gently, upon his arm, she said: "Come inter the house, Dave, an' sit down an' smoke by the fire. We hain't hed a talk fur an age."

"Let me 'lone! I 'm goin' to bail out my dory," he growled; but he redoubled his attentions to the cat.

"'T ain't rained, Dave," pleaded his wife eagerly. She felt afraid of this morose mood; but it had come to the pass that she must speak now, or die of anxiety. "Don't go to the dory again, Dave. Ye ain't fit. Ye ain't as strong as ye used to be." She paused, trembling at her newly found audacity. She wondered how she had dared to say as much as she did. If he had been any other kind of a man, it would have been easy; but to ask *him*, who, in the coast phrase, "never knew his own strength," who had never seen his own will obstructed, and who did not understand that he had become an old

man, — to ask Dave to tear himself from the habits of twenty years, and tell him why, was the most serious and heroic act in her marital experience of nearly half a century. Why, she had put this moment off for five summers, and only a sick woman knows the physical exhaustion that such an interview exacts.

She waited a few moments for an answer, but none came.

Her husband stared stolidly at the dory as it rapidly became obliterated in the black-tinted cove. But she had breached the wall, and there was no retreat.

"Dave, I want you to promise me to give up the dory an' fishin', an' stay to home. A wife orter have some rights after a-livin' with one man forty-seven year. Yer gettin' old, Dave, an' ye ain't what ye was when we fust kept company, me an' you."

Sukey stopped and panted. It had grown so dark that, under the apple-tree where they stood, she could not see his face, but she could hear him mutter.

"'T ain't much to ask," she continued gently.

He stood stolidly, and permitted her touch of entreaty.

"They said ye hed a narrer escape to-day. Yer a little slow of seein', — thet 's what 's the matter."

"Who toll ye?" he asked, with surly suspicion.

She did not answer.

"Who toll ye, I say? Tell me his name! He

hain't no friend o' mine." He took the hand upon his arm and squeezed it roughly.

"Ye hurt me, Dave. Ye would n't hurt yer wife, would ye?"

"No," he growled, flinging her hand away, "'case yer a woman. I would n't hurt no woman. I ain't done so yet. But ye must shet up on the fishin' talk, fur I won't take nobody's lip about my fishin'."

"But I *must*, Dave. I 'm your wife. Hain't I got a right?" Her voice took on a tone of dignity. "Don't I cook for ye, an' get up every mornin' afore daylight, rain or shine, to get ye yer breakfast, when I 'd 'nough rather sleep, an' need it, for I 'm gett'n' old, too?"

"I 'll make me own coffee arter this," he mumbled.

"'T ain't that, Dave. Ye know 't ain't that. Ye ain't fit to go dory-fishin'. Yer old wife wants ye to stay ashore the rest of yer life with her. 'T ain't much to ask at our time of life, Dave."

The pathetic entreaty made in her low, broken, frightened voice ought to have been enough to disarm any man. But this hoary fisherman, who was as firmly set in his daily life as the black fault of trap is in its granite matrix, listened to her with increasing anger. Why should she presume to keep an able-bodied man from his work? What else could he do but fish? At fifteen he had served his apprenticeship on a Grand-Banker; and from that time he had fished every day, except when he

landed a trip, or Sundays, or Fourth of July, or when a storm kept him at home. When he became blind or disabled he would quit, but not before. Such thoughts worked within him and mastered him. Was not his unimpeached manhood wronged by his wife, and should he not be exasperated by it?

"Ain't I bin a-goin' fur sixty year, an' ain't I bin dory-fishin' fur twenty-five year, an' ain't bin lost yet? What 'u'd I do if I did n't go? By gorry! neither you nor nobody else kin stop me. D' ye hear thet? Now shet up. I tell ye, so help me God, I 'll go till I die!" He spoke passionately, raising his hand with a final oath; then he sharply turned and went into the kitchen, and slammed the door after him.

Slowly, sick at heart, but not wholly exhausted of courage, Sukey followed him. She found him in his old seat beside the stove, surlily filling his pipe, with the cat purring happily in his lap. He did not look up when she entered, but his brow grew darker at the sound of her approach. She noticed this, and then for the first time she began to lose her temper. She was a Methodist, and devout. Her voice had gradually acquired a sing-song tone, such as is common with uncultured exhorters. It was in such a voice of rising and falling quavers, of deep notes and falsetto intervals, that she had been pleading with him until now.

Beyond the frown, Dave took no notice of her

as she entered. The baffled woman, feeling that she must gain her point, yet not knowing how to begin again, busied herself in tidying up the kitchen. Although her feet ached so that it seemed to her it would be a relief to have them cut off, she did not sit down. She thought that such a sign of weakness would be interpreted as a concession. As she put away her dishes she thought of her hard life, of her lonely home, of that eroding anxiety from which a fisherman's wife is never free. Any night she might look in vain for the dingy sail. Any morning's "Good-by, Dave," might be the last word. She never parted with him, if she could help it, with an untender word. "'T ain't much to do," she often said to herself, "to hev a pleasant rek'lectshun of our last meet'n', if he don't come back." It occurred to her, as she bent over her pretended work at cleaning the sink, that it was about time to have relief after nearly half a century of watching the boats and the weather. Now, too, when the Lord had smitten him with a solemn warning.

She began to feel that she could stand the silence no longer. With a voice made uniform by deep feeling, and the braveness of a woman sure of the rights of her case, she approached her husband and stood before his chair.

"Eddy George has got eighty thousand jest come in from the Banks this mornin'. Tom 's got the fever, an' they wants a new hand on the wharf fur weighin'. Eddy asked me if ye 'd come to-

morrer at six. I told him I thought ye would, seein' it 's twenty-five cents an hour, an' easy work." Her voice grew firmer as she finished and waited for his answer.

He cast up at her a quick look that expressed more fully than words the contempt which the catcher of live fish feels for the handler of dead ones. The one leads an untrammeled life of danger, of excitement, of change, and of hope; the other, the slimy existence of a snail upon an unsavory wharf. The one is poetry, the other prose. The one always expects to support his family for months by a single lucky stroke; the other does it by persistent days' labor, with no luck in the balance.

"I ain't hed to work on the wharves yet, an' I ain't goin' to start in now. Eddy George kin go to" —

The old man brought his fist down on his knee as he spoke; the round of the chair under his foot gave way with a crash, and his two feet came down with a startling stamp. The cat, frightened at being thrown to the floor, scurried under the stove. There are some natures so controlled that it is impossible for another to provoke them to an explosion; but let some sudden maladroitness of their own occur, in an unguarded moment, allowing their rage open spite against themselves, it bursts all barriers like a great inundation. This unforeseen accident to his favorite chair first inflamed Dave's wrath against himself, and then

against his wife. He trembled in every muscle, yet she did not retreat. She too had the temper and the courage of her hot-blooded ancestry. Now that it had inevitably come to the battle, she felt that right and love were on her side, and her poor old limbs and her quavering voice took strength from the moral consciousness.

"Ye did it!" he snarled, standing up. "Ye 'd better go, an' let me alone. Don't ye speak. Hain't I fed ye for forty-seven year, an' ye shall" —

"Ye hain't. Ye hain't made 'nough fur the last two year, Dave, to feed the cat. Thet 's the straight truth, — thet is. They say ye can't see the marks, an' of course ye can't catch no fish when yer off the grounds; only a cunner, or a rock cod or two, or a sculpin. Hain't I taken in mendin' fur the last three year, since baby died, ter pay the bills? Hain't I gone out washin' on the sly, an' hain't told ye before, an' ye never know'd it? Hain't I set hungry here that ye might hev enough when ye came home tuckered out? Don't ye say no more to me about feedin', Dave! I can't allow it." Aggravated into this confession of the want which she had proudly concealed from him, she now cast it at him as if it were a stone.

Her husband fell back a step, as if he had been struck in a vital spot. His face assumed a frightful expression. The fact that he believed the assertion to be true only enraged him the more.

What worse insult can a man receive from his wife than the taunt that he is incapable of supporting the family?

"It 's a —— lie," he stammered. "Take it back, or, by gorry, I 'll make ye!"

"Thet 's it," replied the undaunted woman, towering to his own height. "Starve me, an' then beat me. Ye ain't no man of mine."

He had taken her harshly by the arm. Was he about to strike his wife for the first time? He did not know what he would do. His eyes grew bloodshot and dim. A vague longing for revenge overpowered him. His hands began to tremble violently.

"That 's a —— lie. Git out! I 'll never speak to ye again, so help me God!" For the second time that evening he flung her arm away from him, but this time feebly.

Sukey did not notice any change in him. She almost wished that he had struck her. When morning came, the blow would have gained her point; but at what a cost!

"Look ye here, Dave," she said in a caustic tone. "Ye have told me twice thet I lie. Ye know I spoke the truth. Ye orter be ashamed of yerself. An' if ye don't want ter speak to me agin, I kin stand it; an' I won't speak to ye neither until ye give up the dory, an' stay to home where ye belong."

Panting with indignation, astounded at her own bitterness and temerity, she waited for a reply.

Instinctively she put up her hand to ward off the blow that was certain to fall. But neither word nor violence came. With a low groan Dave sank back into his chair. Caddy, the cat, jumped up on his lap contentedly. He closed his eyes, and the color faded from his face.

Sukey started to say "Dave!" but stopped. Her anger had fallen as the wind before the rain. She looked at him a trifle apprehensively, but he quieted her fears by stroking the cat. She waited about for a few minutes nervously, not knowing what to do; then she left the room and went to bed, and wept convulsively, with tearless eyes, far into the dismal night.

Now it is a fact which the narrator is compelled to record, that the threat of these two old people, made in hot blood, was kept in cool. For nearly three years, with a deliberation and a steadfastness worthy of better things, they kept the word which they had pledged in anger. He did not speak to her, nor she to him. One would have thought that they were old enough to know better. But pride does not age. It never does know better: that is the trouble. They both belonged to that primal New England stock which is rapidly dying out, and which you can no more tear from its notions than you can tear the earshell from its grip upon the submerged rocks. When they had "passed their word," and began to carry it out, they stood to it as the boulder stands to its base upon the granite cliff.

The next morning Dave lit the kitchen fire and made his own coffee before daybreak, filled his stone jug with spring water, took half a loaf of bread, and disappeared with his dory before his wife was up. The feeling that he had been wronged did not leave him for a moment. It did not occur to Sukey, on the other hand, to entertain a thought of compromise, unless it should come, as the law phrase puts it, from "the party of the second part."

When Dave returned to his home, just before sunset, long after supper-time, Sukey received him mechanically. She set before him cold corned beef, cold pie, and hot tea, of which he partook in cold silence. So determined were they not to speak at this first interview that the effort not to talk was already the most natural thing in the world. It was not resentment, but crystallized tenacity, which at the end of the week turned the fixed idea into a settled fact, and habitual silence between this husband and his wife set in with ominous calm. To break this mute contract seemed to each an impossible dishonor, — worse than to steal herring from another man's nets, or to stock a grog-shop for entrapping fishermen and shipping a returned crew.

But the iron mask of dumbness must not conceal all the features of the heart. Besides, neighbors had to be considered. If it were known in Mackerel Cove that Dave Plummet and his wife "did not speak," the sinners would be besieged by

a mob of friends and relatives, and thousand-feathered rumor would work a quarrel into a scandal. Thus it came about that the woman, who had the hard time of it, sitting at home, sewing laboriously, saving penuriously, generally alone, — the woman fell into the way of talking to the cat.

"Go, Caddy, an' see if yer master is comin' home," she would say, when the noon sun came. And Caddy would go to the kitchen door that commanded the inner cove and the fish wharves diagonally opposite, and arch her back, rubbing it against the side of the steps, purring vigorously.

"What shall I give him fur dinner, Caddy?"

"Run an' tell yer master to hurry up, or the vittles 'll get cold, Caddy."

Then Dave, who was only a little more bull-necked than the rest of his class, would nod cheerfully in return and answer, "Tell yer missus, Caddy, that as soon as I hang up my oilskins I 'll be there."

"Go, Caddy, an' tell yer master ther' ain't no wood left."

"Whach ye want, Caddy, this time?" The old man would lean over and stroke the lamp-black cat. "Yer a nice critter, you be. Want wood, do ye? Ye shall hev it. Run to yer missus an' tell her I 'll split 'nough of this here driftwood to last till day arter to-morrer."

And the cat, apparently understanding her new mission in life, would dutifully, and yet with a certain coquettish grace never absent from her kind,

trot back, and arch herself, and stretch her claws, and beg the reward of a piece of fish.

At four o'clock in the morning you might hear a voice, hoarse like the October wind upon the red shore, call from below, "Caddy! Git up, Caddy! It 's nigh daylight."

And the answer would come in the sing-song quaver, in a voice pseudomorph after his own: "Caddy! Run an' tell yer master I 'll be down in a jiffy. Tell him to light the fire an' put the water on to bile."

Thus did love compromise with what they considered necessity. But neither spoke to the other. The cat was the sole interpreter.

So the time passed for three summers. Years fly as men slip past the grim keeper of the seventieth toll-gate; but they are counted with groans, and not with smiles. Old Dave no longer fished for cod upon the rocks. Indeed, sometimes he tried to make up his mind to give up dory-fishing altogether; but his pride would not yield to his weakness. Then the dory began to show undeniable signs of dissolution: this touched him deeper than his own disability. When, in the spring, with the friendly aid of Cap'n Joe, he hauled the dory above high-water mark, and nailed and calked the garboard streak again, counted the other vital repairs that ought to be made in her, made some of them and tried to forget the rest, and then put on a "light lick" of coal tar and kerosene upon her bottom, he felt as if he should never do this again.

"Ye 'd better look out, Dave, an' not jump around thet dory of yourn too lively," said Cap'n Joe warningly. "Ye could put yer toe through anywheres, — yer dory is so wormy as thet."

From that time Dave always wore rubber boots in his dory, and whenever he moved he did it as gingerly as if he were sailing on tissue paper.

Dave had gradually diminished the radius of his fishing operations. When he could no longer find the marks for Killick Ledge, or Saturday Nights, or Spot o' Rocks, he contented himself by casting anchor a hundred yards outside the black buoy at the mouth of the harbor. But now he could not see more than a hundred yards off, and he had several times missed the red Life-Saving Station, the easiest mark of all. This summer he took to coasting along the shore, following the western side of the harbor until about two miles out. There he fished for cunners. He was not strong enough to haul lobster-pots. But cunners brought a cent apiece. Sometimes he made "as high" as two dollars a day, selling them for the city market. But what a descent, from cod to cunners! He felt himself now on a level with the Irishmen who scoured the waters for the same game in their ungainly black sloops, which the fishermen contemptuously called "kemoilyers." However, Dave never deigned to catch cunners with a scoop-net. True, he might have trebled his receipts that way. But should he, the mighty fisherman of old, entrap a cunner but by a hook? He would live and die

a legitimate fisherman. Seines and trawls and nets were an abomination to him.

A marked change began to come over him as he reached the third summer of his resolution. Dave, in his seventy-eighth year, made a discovery. He began — who could say how? — to compute the value of home. He did n't start off mornings much before six, — as late as that, — and even then he seemed to tear himself away; he was sure to return by noon. That constituted his day's work. It was not that he loved his dory less, but his cottage more. Then he began to plant the garden, and to raise a few sunflowers and cauliflowers and potatoes. He took an old dory that had made its last voyage ten years before, filled it with earth, sowed it with garden seed, and covered it with a condemned herring net, to keep his neighbor's chickens out. This he presented to Caddy with the suggestion that she give it to her mistress.

"Thank ye, Caddy," said Sukey. "It 's a pretty garding. I 'm much obliged to ye, tell yer master, Caddy."

Sukey was almost happy in these days. She brought her knitting, or her apples to pare, or peas to shell, and sat under the shade of the apple-tree and worked and watched her husband in a contented dream.

Caddy, the cat, worked too. That member of the household was never allowed to be out of sight. Never since the days of the Pharaohs did a cat have kinder or more exacting owners. If she dis-

appeared for half an hour, the machinery of the household became utterly out of gear. Then Dave ran as fast as he could in one direction, and Sukey hobbled as well as she could in another, and Caddy invariably turned up from somewhere else, with an amused glitter in her eyes, and sat demurely washing her face with alternate paws, guarding the empty premises until the anxious couple hurried back, almost beside themselves and out of breath. They dared not punish her for such innocent escapades, for fear she would run away forever. The old woman would scold her mildly: "Oh, Caddy, ye sinner ye! An' I 've bin runnin' round the square huntin' creation for ye."

"Ye sha'n't hev that herrin' I fetched home fur ye," Dave would say sternly. "Now ask yer mistress if I had n't better take the clothes-line down. It nigh tuk my head off. I forgit it every time I move."

And Sukey would answer cheerfully: "Naughty Caddy! Naughty cat! Ye skinned out! Ye 'll have no supper fur that. Jest go an' tell yer master he kin take it down when he 's a mind ter, an' ask him ter step aroun' to the store an' git a pound of butter. We 're all out. I declare, it 's time to set fur supper."

In those latter days, supper was the most important meal of this household. They were too bitterly poor to have meat more than once a week; but when they did have it, it was fried for supper. Breakfast was only a hurried cup of coffee with

condensed milk and a piece of bread. Dinner was a variable meal, and became princely when Dave caught a chance haddock, or somebody on the wharves gave him a slice of halibut: then they had a chowder or a luscious fry; otherwise, potatoes and flakes of dried cod formed the staple diet. But Sukey tried to have a variety for tea. This evening they had liver, partly for Caddy's sake, but chiefly as a surprise for Dave.

"Ye kin tell him ter wash up, an' keep out of the kitchen till I call ye, Caddy."

"Here, Caddy! She wants ter come it on us. Give her her own way, puss. We know what she 's got, don't we, Caddy? Ain't we smellin' on it?" He went obediently to the pump, followed by the great black cat, who eyed him philosophically. Dave washed his furrowed face slowly, thinking with an old man's tenderness about his wife, whom he was just beginning to understand after fifty years of companionship, and with whom he was not on speaking terms.

Then came the summons which he began to love, in the voice that he had learned to depend upon: "Caddy! Call master to supper!"

"God bless me home," thought the gruff old fellow, as he sat down to his smoking meal. Somehow his rheumy eyes had to be wiped. His love had found its way to the surface too late. How he longed to tell her this! But he could n't. He did n't know how. He was n't in the habit of saying sweet things to his wife. Besides, he never

would speak to her again — unless she spoke first. He began to talk to the cat about the liver.

"Caddy run away to-day, an' can't hev any," returned Sukey, pushing the persistent creature over to her husband.

"Tell yer missus I stocked eighty-two cents to-day, an' sixty-three yesterday. They say mack'rel is as scerce ez rebels. The bluefish druv 'em all off the coast. There ain't no cunners, Caddy, to speak on, neither." The veteran wiped his mouth on his shirt-sleeve with a happy air, and proudly pulled out a leathern pouch, and as proudly counted out his two days' gains upon the table, minus ten cents for a package of navy plug. He was as happy as a boy, when he made a dollar.

"That 's handsome on him, Caddy," answered Sukey, bending over the cat. "Tell him he hev done better 'n I expected. Fish is so intoler'ble scerce."

"It seems ter me, puss," began Dave, hunting with his eyes under the table for the cat, in order that the delusion might be the more honest (they never looked each other in the face while they were in the act of addressing Caddy, — they looked at the cat; but when the sentence was well finished, then the eyes of each sought the other; they were above practicing deception upon their black companion), — "it seems ter me thet this is a toler'ble happy home. Ain't you happy, Caddy? Ask yer missus if she ain't."

Sukey flushed tenderly. "Tell him, Caddy,

we 're gett'n' on too old to be mean-sperited. It orter to be easy fur old married folks like us to be straight-spoken an' good one to t'other. Ain't thet so, Caddy ? "

They both bent to stroke their daily interpreter; as they did so their hands touched and clasped. Such emotion was rare with these old hearts which had existed so many years together, and were just beginning to live for each other. Through their bitterness and their three years of silence they had found their honeymoon, and did not know it.

They were much moved, and for a few moments neither had strength to address the cat. At last, the man, a little ashamed of his feelings, started for the door.

" Run out, Caddy," he called, " an' see if it 'll be a southerly to-morrer. If the wind 'll blow light southerly, I 'll go out at four in the mornin', an' then lay her up fur a couple of days, perhaps fur more. Her bottom needs a good dryin'." He added the last explanation to satisfy his own conscience; for this was the greatest concession which he had made since that dreadful evening. The clasp of his wife's work-hardened hands had wrung a noble resolution from him. He would give up his dory. This was a decision nothing less than tremendous to the blear-eyed, tremulous fisherman. In stormy weather a man expected to stay at home. But to give up the dory, and the freedom that goes with it, in midsummer and with fair skies, — this was a cruel experiment. Yet he had got so far as

this — for her sake; but he felt that it would be a mortal wrench. Less changes than that have killed men grown white in their daily routine.

The aged wife followed him to the door, and watched him going to see if his dory-line were thoroughly made fast for the night.

"It 's too good ter believe, Caddy," she said softly. "I 've bin wait'n' so long. Run an' ask him, Caddy, if he really means ter stay ter home."

The next day, at noon, when he had brought his dory to its moorings, he was met by Sukey, who trembled in every limb. She looked at him like a dumb animal that has received a deadly hurt. Dave almost forgot himself. In his excitement he started to ask her what was the matter; then he remembered. He hauled his dory out on the line as fast as he could, and hurried up the garden and looked about for his interpreter.

"Caddy!" he cried in a hoarse, quavering voice. Then he looked at his wife, and by the hopeless expression of her face knew that Caddy was not there. He did not call again. He felt that it was useless. He walked slowly toward the house.

Here was a catastrophe. Neither knew what to do, nor how to communicate with the other. They regarded each other dumbly. It never occurred to either to speak directly out. They did not understand that they could. The habit of silence had become a second nature. The old woman was the first to break the uncomfortable pause.

"Caddy!" she called in a trembling voice.

"Ain't I hunted fur ye since six in the mornin' every blessed minute, everywheres? Come, Caddy, come home. Po-or Caddy! Oh me! Whatever is goin' to become of us without Caddy?"

But the cat did not present herself, and the problem of the situation deepened.

Dave hunted far into the night. His neighbors offered various views of the case. Cap'n Joe, not having an original mind, thought that the cat must have been killed by a dog. His wife, Mary Sarah, suggested kidnapping by an Italian salt-bark that went out at high tide at ten o'clock. Theories there were plenty, but cat there was none.

That night, for the first time, the two old people sat alone in the kitchen, and their oath was between them. Neither dared to look at the other. They sighed and sat apart, glanced wistfully every now and then at the open door, and sighed again. Even Dave's pipe afforded him no consolation that dismal night. In a fit of desperation Sukey went feebly over to Mary Sarah to borrow her cat for the night. "There are rats," she explained. But the cat, who remembered too well Caddy's jealous claws, would not be caught.

A catless and silent evening followed. Only the clock talked. She — one calls clocks by the feminine appellative in Mackerel Cove — she expostulated.

The next morning, adrift in this new sea of loneliness, the aged couple awoke at daylight, renewed the search for their interpreter until long past the

breakfast hour, then ate, then called and searched again. By noon the conviction that Caddy would never come back, was probably dead, began to force itself upon them. It seemed as if they could not bear the bereavement. It was worse than if they had lost a relative. They felt that they had lost themselves. They were hardly able to sit down to their choking meal. They ate convulsively, furtively watching each other. Both had grown very old during the night. In spite of the self-imposed barrier between them, each felt nearer than usual to the other. It was as if they had been suddenly deserted by all the world.

As they sat silently moving their lips and looking at each other with longing eyes, the woman formed a great resolution.

"Ain't he give up the dory?" she argued to herself between the gulps of coffee. "Then ain't it my duty to speak to him, even if I said I would n't? 'T ain't like breakin' yer word. 'T won't hurt the Lord none."

She became hot, then pale, at the mere thought of speaking to her own husband. The blood welled at her heart and almost suffocated her. Would he stare at her in dumb scorn, or would he answer? Before she knew what she was doing, the woman, frightened, choking, lifted up her voice and spoke.

What did she say? What should she say? Did she cry out to him, falling on his neck, pleading forgiveness or extending it, pleading for tenderness or offering it? Into what dramatic crisis

did this domestic tragedy burst? In what passionate language did she cover the story of their folly and regret and suffering? She said: "Dave, dear, ye hain't got 'nough sugar in yer cup. Let me give ye some more." That was all.

It was not much to say after years of silence, but, such as it was, it was half enough to kill her. She burst into a great sob. She got up and made as if she would move toward him, then stopped.

"Don't be mad, Dave. I had ter speak, we 're so lonely, an' I could n't help it. Say something, Dave. Oh me! Oh me! Ain't ye my husband? Speak to me, Dave!"

With this, for she could bear no more, she fell at his feet.

The old man looked down upon his wife with an expression of bewilderment, as if a cloud-burst had overwhelmed him. He did not understand at first. He wanted to speak, to comfort her, but he could not. His voice, obedient to long custom, still refused to come — for *her*. He lifted her and put her on a chair. He was greatly moved as he looked at her. Mechanically he stroked her head. A hoarse, animal sound came from his throat, but no word. He walked about the room helplessly, not knowing what to do. And now a great struggle boiled within the old fisherman's soul. His masculine pride was at bay. Would it surrender to the woman or not?

Through the door his eye caught sight of the hauling-line of his dory. This familiar object

seemed to steady his intellect. He tottered out to it, and stood for a long time regarding his boat. But Sukey stayed within the house and washed the dishes. When she had put away the tumblers she began to pray.

Perhaps it was half an hour before he looked back through the open kitchen door. His dim eyes saw the bent shadow pass to and fro within. He started, and halted, and started again. The struggle that he had thought decided began once more as he approached the house. In his life he had never given in, and now that he was old should he begin? The storm-chiseled lines upon his face grew hard. But it was his home, and it was his wife.

He stopped in the doorway, looked back at the dory and upon his life, and then looked in. She sat crouching before the stove, the tears dripping from her meagre cheeks. She did not look up. She was afraid to.

Dave walked slowly in. What was this new feeling that rose straight from his heart to his throat and throttled him? He waited until that spasm was over, not daring to move, hardly to breathe. Was it death? If so, he must hurry, before it smote again.

"Sukey," he said, steadying himself by the back of her chair, and speaking as quietly as if it were of no consequence whether he spoke or not, "I 'm goin' to sell her fur what I kin get, an' stay ashore with you arter this." He pointed to the bank off

which the dory lay. "I won't go fishin' no more. I guess I kin pick up a dollar or so about the wharves."

"Oh, *Dave!*" cried the woman, on a high, hysteric key; but she recovered herself immediately. "I don't ask ye to do that, Dave. Ye 'd better not sell her yet; ye might want her to go ter the harbor with."

In this simple way they both made atonement. They did not beg each other's pardon, but, as so frequently happens after a quarrel, each took the other's point of view.

For three days they lived together. Dave did not even leave the garden. They had never lived in this way before. Now it seemed a necessity. They gave up looking for or awaiting the cat. They were surprised to find that they did not miss her as they had expected to. They forgot that they no longer needed an interpreter. During life's rare honeymoons great losses are small affairs. It is then that friends are not a necessary luxury.

For three days Dave puttered about the house. The weather was divine. The first day he grumbled over an old song; the second day he whistled at it; and the third day Sukey found him, in the morning, sitting under the apple-tree regarding the dory restlessly. He tried hard not to show his uneasiness, fearing that it might make her unhappy; but her quick eyes noticed how he threw eager looks at that other home of more than twenty years. How could it be otherwise? It was his office, his

business, his life, that he abandoned with a sudden wrench to please his wife, and the strain was more than the old man could bear. But he was not cross. He could never say a harsh word to his wife again.

This enforced retirement, together with the great excitement of the loss of his cat and the finding of his wife, enfeebled him rapidly. As he drew life from the water, so he perished away from it.

That night his wife performed the last heroic act of her life. It does not seem a great act to us. It was supreme for her. So might a Frenchman, singlehanded, storm Gibraltar.

"I think ye had better go out again to-morrer, Dave," said Sukey slowly. "Ye 'll be keerful, an' I won't mind it. Ye might make a dollar cunnerin', an' the money would come handy."

"No, Sukey. I give ye my word, an' I never gone back on it yet — 'cept once," he added, shaking his head and taking his after-supper pipe out of his mouth. Yet his hand twitched, and his moving eyes swept the little cove with a great longing.

"I give ye back yer word, Dave. Go out to-morrer, to please me, an' if ye want to make that the last day I won't say no more."

"But ye 'll be alone. Kin ye stand it?"

He had never said this to her before. He had never thought of the solitude of her who worked in the house without distraction and without company. In his late honeymoon he began to comprehend new things.

But Sukey said pleasantly: "No, Dave, that 's nothin'. You 'll be happier. It 'll be a fine day to-morrer. I 've cleanin' to do, an' yer best out of it."

"If ye only had Caddy," he remonstrated feebly.

He knew, as soon as she mentioned the matter, that he should go. It was an old heart he carried in his breast, but it leaped with the freshness of youth at the sight and the touch of his precious dory and his beloved sea.

"Air ye sure ye want me to go?" he asked slowly, as he undid his hauling-line from the oar-stumps the next morning.

There was not a cloud, not a breath. Every vessel, the church spires, the distant hills, were dreamy in the soft haze, like one of Turner's early landscapes. Man looked out of place among his own works. It seemed a sin to make a motion upon that limpid morning. Fishermen are not often touched by the beautiful. Fair weather and good fares of fish are all they care for. This rare, poetic quality of the atmosphere, the ecstasy of artists, is usually greeted with grunts of dissatisfaction by the nautical inhabitants. No dory-man cares to row six miles to his fishing-grounds. Idle sails afford good pay to painters, and small joy to their owners. But this morning the aged couple looked upon their little cove as it lay idealized before them in the soft sunrise.

"'T ain't an ugly home, nohow," said Sukey, resting in a new way upon her husband's arm.

"Thet 's so," he answered, untying a double hitch. "Air ye sure ye want me to go? I 'm yourn now, deary."

His fiftieth wedding-day was coming soon, and he was getting along famously in the art of love-making.

"No, Dave; go. But come back when yer mine to, an' take care. Law! Mary Sarah or Cap'n Joe 'll see."

It was only a kiss her husband gave her, but if he had given her the Star of the South she would not have been more surprised and overcome. With a wave of her aged hand, such as she used to give him fifty years before, when she was young and plump, she watched him row with feeble strokes slowly around the bend of the cove. Then, with a face happier than it had been before since Sukey was a bride, the old woman went back to her home, and sang a courting-song that bubbled into her memory.

It was late in the afternoon. The six o'clock whistles from the rival copper-paint factories were not yet due, but the tide that had halted languidly now turned and flowed irresistibly in. The sun burned hot. Toward its setting not a cloud was to be seen, but in the high east wonderful white tufts of feathers shot curved streamers. One cloud there was in particular which looked like a gigantic medusa, with its tentacles waving far behind. Another had the appearance of a comet

with a twin tail. Still a third was a scimiter that Death himself might have carried. Such skies are not to be seen except in Mackerel Cove. The southwest breeze that had arisen fitfully with the sun, and had been steady at noon, now prepared itself to perish with the setting of the day. It was a light air and high, and touched only the great salt mirror here and there in spots and streaks. Although this summer zephyr blew up the harbor toward the town, and carried with it the incoming tide and bits of wood and here and there a water-soaked log upon its surface, still the few belated fishing-boats and a small yacht plied their oars lest they be late for supper. One great fishing-schooner, just in from the Grand Banks, hoping to make the harbor before night, had out six dories ahead, towing anxiously.

In the middle of the light and of the harbor, headed toward the wharves, a large-sized dory could be seen, with sails set, drifting home with the wind and tide. The occupant was evidently not in a hurry to land his day's catch, for he neither steered into the streak of wind that ruffled the water at his left, nor did he row. He gave the impression of being busy counting fish, for he was bent over into the pen in the middle of the dory where the fish are kept, and nothing but his back could be seen.

Not far behind another dory approached vigorously. Its occupant had long since dropped his sail in the coming calm, and trusted to his robust

arms. Swiftly it overtook its drifting mate, and passed it a few yards away.

"Hullo!" cried Cap'n Joe, as he rested on his oars for a moment. "Hullo, Dave! How'd ye find 'em to-day?" He waited for an answer. "How many yer got, Dave?" he asked again.

The figure in the boat still bent to its count, and did not deign a reply. This discourtesy did not disconcert his friend and neighbor. With a shrug he pulled on.

"I allus thought," he said to himself, with an anxious face, "that Dave is ez deef ez he is blind. He ort not to go in thet dory no more. Neither of 'em ain't fit. Thet's my opinyun." He rowed a few strokes, and looked back again. "Dave's really failin'," he muttered. "I guess me and Mary Sarah had better run in arter supper." Then he kept on, for he had three hundredweight of cod and haddock for the market, and was late that day.

Still drifting with the expiring wind and with the swelling tide, the dory, true to its course, floated into Mackerel Cove. The whistles had shrieked, and the observant sun was about to turn his face away and dip behind a notch in the hills. The wharves were nearly deserted. A few men were washing the great square boxes in which fish had been weighed the whole day. The dories were all home to supper but this one.

"Yer late, Dave."

"Any luck to-day?"

"How many?"

"He 's countin' on 'em."

"Dave 's git'n' old an' queer an' deef!"

Such exclamations passed over the enameled water, but brought no answer. Dave did not even look up.

And now the calm came, and the dory, drifting with the tide alone, slowly, surely, found its way into the inner cove to its familiar moorings. She went like a creature that knew its way home. By this time the sun had set, and the always mysterious twilight fell upon all the world.

Dave's old wife came down the garden to meet him. She walked with a brisk step. Her face was bright and playful. A little moving object, dark against the growing dusk, followed her. It was the truant cat. She had a disreputable air, but she purred loudly, and rubbed her lean body against Sukey's calico skirts.

The dory bumped against its own rock gently.

"Dave, Caddy 's come back. D' ye see Caddy? Ye 've hed a nice long day. I hope ye 've enjoyed yerself. How many yer got? Hain't ye got through countin' on 'em? Supper 's hot an' waitin'. Caddy, *go bring yer dear master!*"

She hurried down a step or two, and put out her trembling hand to catch the painter, as she sometimes did. In the dusk she stooped and looked. Then the shore and the sea rang to the cry she uttered.

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